B-17 IN ACTION

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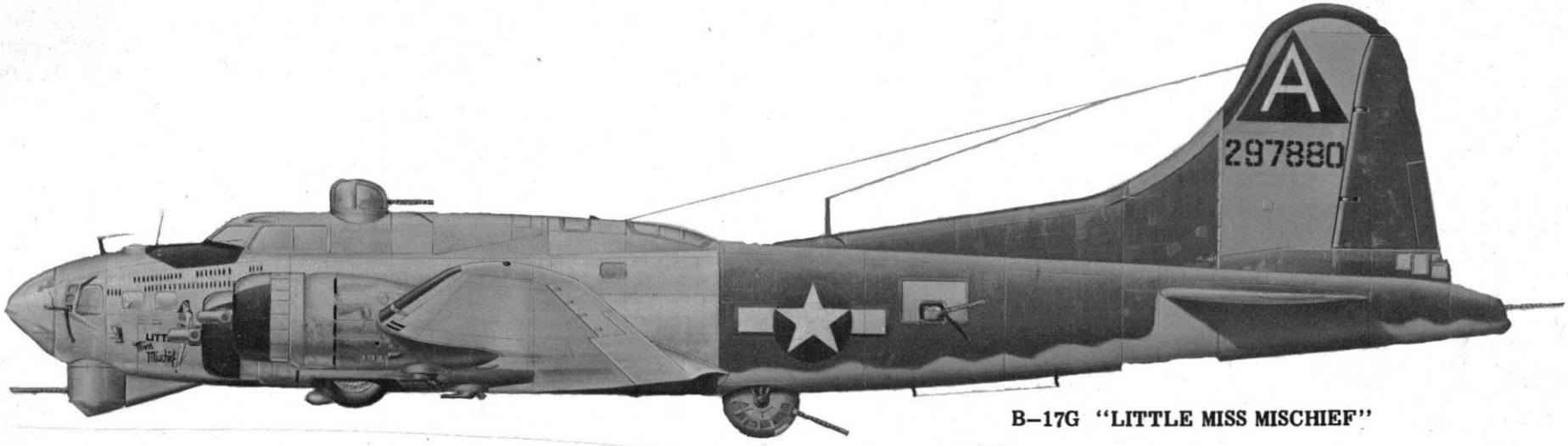
B-17 IN ACTION

written by Steve Birdsall



B–17G "LITTLE MISS MISCHIEF"

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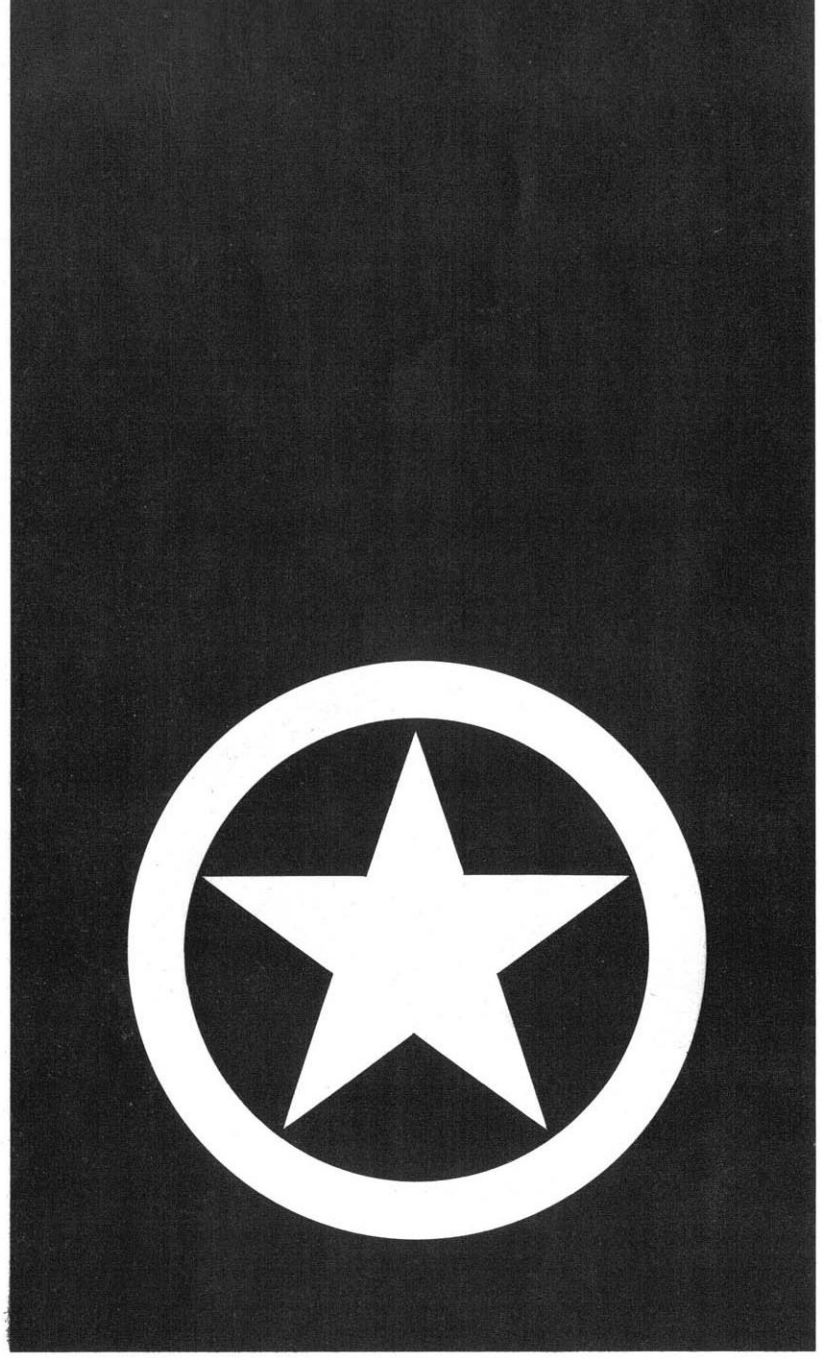

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Berlin Sleeper flew with the 97th Group in England, and later in North Africa when the group went to the Twelfth Air Force. A B-17F-1-BO, she was the first B-17 to fly one hundred combat missions.

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The Legend of the FLYING FORTRESS

There will never be another aircraft like the **B-17.** Times have changed, war has changed, people have changed.

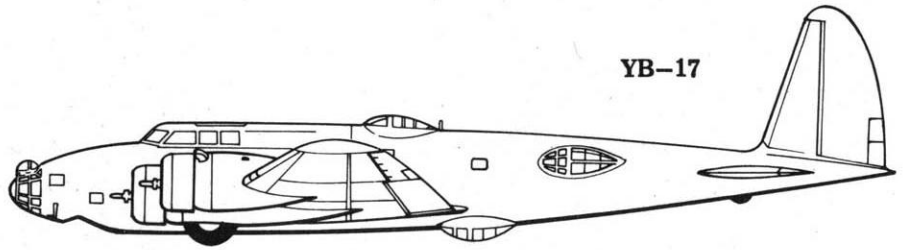
When the Army set out its 1934 requirements for a bomber able to fly at 250 miles per hour, with a service ceiling of 25,000 feet and six to ten hours endurance, Boeing was ready to give it a try. Their highly successful Model 247 airliner had led to many advances and bridged many technical gaps. . . The company was already working on the giant XB-15, the largest aircraft to fly when it finally took off in 1937. So, while most manufacturers submitted twin-engine designs, the team under Edward C. Wells in Seattle started working on Model 299.

Construction began on August 16, 1934 and, borrowing liberally from the XB-15 and Model 247, Boeing produced a superb aircraft, free of the gawkiness which characterized so many bombers of the thirties. The first Fortress carried eight crew members, was powered by four 750 horsepower engines, and weighed 43,000 pounds. It was sixty-eight feet nine inches long, with a wingspan of nearly 104 feet, and there were four gun blisters, with provision for a fifth .30 caliber gun in the nose.

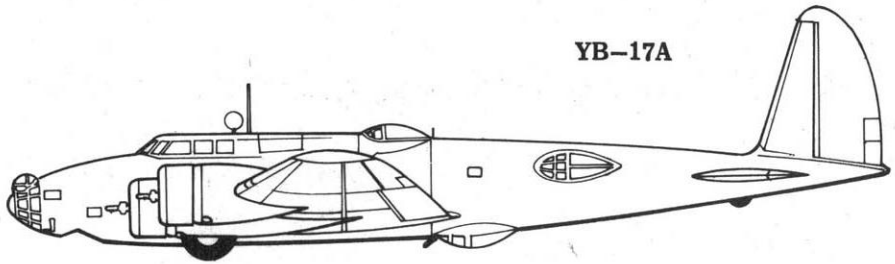
The acid test took place on July 28, 1935, when test pilot Les Tower took Model 299 up for the first time. When the ninety minute test flight was over a lot of apprehension was gone and a lot of work justified. On August 20 the plane was taken to Wright Field for evaluation by the Air Corps. The Fortress easily matched up to the claims made for her.

Suddenly, on October 30, the big silver plane stalled sickeningly into the ground on takeoff. As it burned fiercely the five crewmen were dragged out. Tower and the co-pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill, died. The investigation proved that the controls had been locked, unknown to the pilots, and when the aircraft lifted it became uncontrollable. Even so, the Air Corps' projected order of sixty-five Fortresses was dropped and only thirteen examples were asked for, perhaps a temptation to fate in itself.

With these thirteen **YB-17's** the foundation to the legend was laid. One was assigned to Wright Field for destruction testing, the other twelve went to the G.H.Q. Air Force for America's first heavy bomber group, the 2nd. In December 1936 Captain Stanley Umstead brought the first YB-17 into Seattle after a brief flight, and as onlookers groaned the steel and bronze brakes, quick to overheat, fused from overuse. The Fortress' nose dug a two hundred and forty foot, $5,000 furrow. The B-17 could not have made a worse entry into the field of inter-service squabbling, miserly allocations, distrust of "strategic bombing" and general anti-military feeling that was prevalent in the United States.

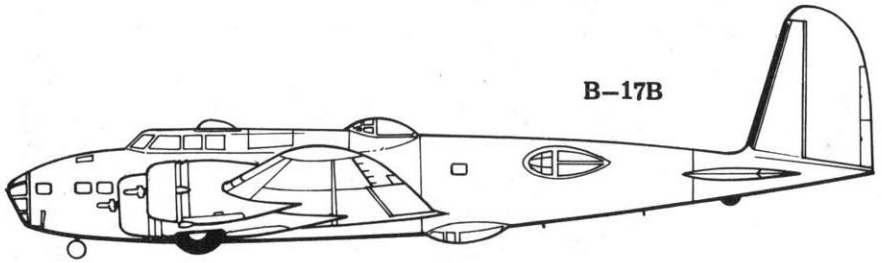


Drastic action was needed, and taken. The biggest publicity campaign in Air Corps history began. Records of every kind were relegated to pale history by the new bomber. The YB-17 set aside for destruction-by-testing passed one big test quickly and unconventionally. Running into a storm, it was flipped over on its back and began plummeting downward. By the time it was pulled out of that dive any tests were superfluous. So that Fortress was modified into the next model, the **YB-17A,** equipped with turbo superchargers which added 55 mph to its maximum speed.



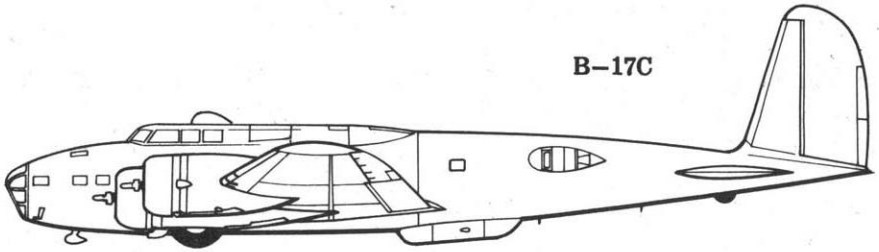
In February 1938 six Fortresses flew from Miami to Buenos Aires to attend the presidential inauguration ceremonies there. During the five thousand mile goodwill flight they stopped once, at Lima. That was really long range in 1938, and the flight won the Mackay Trophy for outstanding aerial achievement. In May, Fortresses flew nearly eight hundred miles out to sea to intercept the Italian liner **Rex,** to the dismay of many Navy men. This unsolicited demonstration resulted in their being restricted to flights no further than one hundred miles out from the coast. Past that was apparently Navy water.

In all, the first Fortresses notched up over one million miles in the air without a single serious accident.



The first production model of the bomber was the **B-17B,** and like all but the first, Model 299, it was powered by Wright Cyclone engines. The pneumatic brakes were dropped in favor of hydraulics, but little else was needed to be changed.

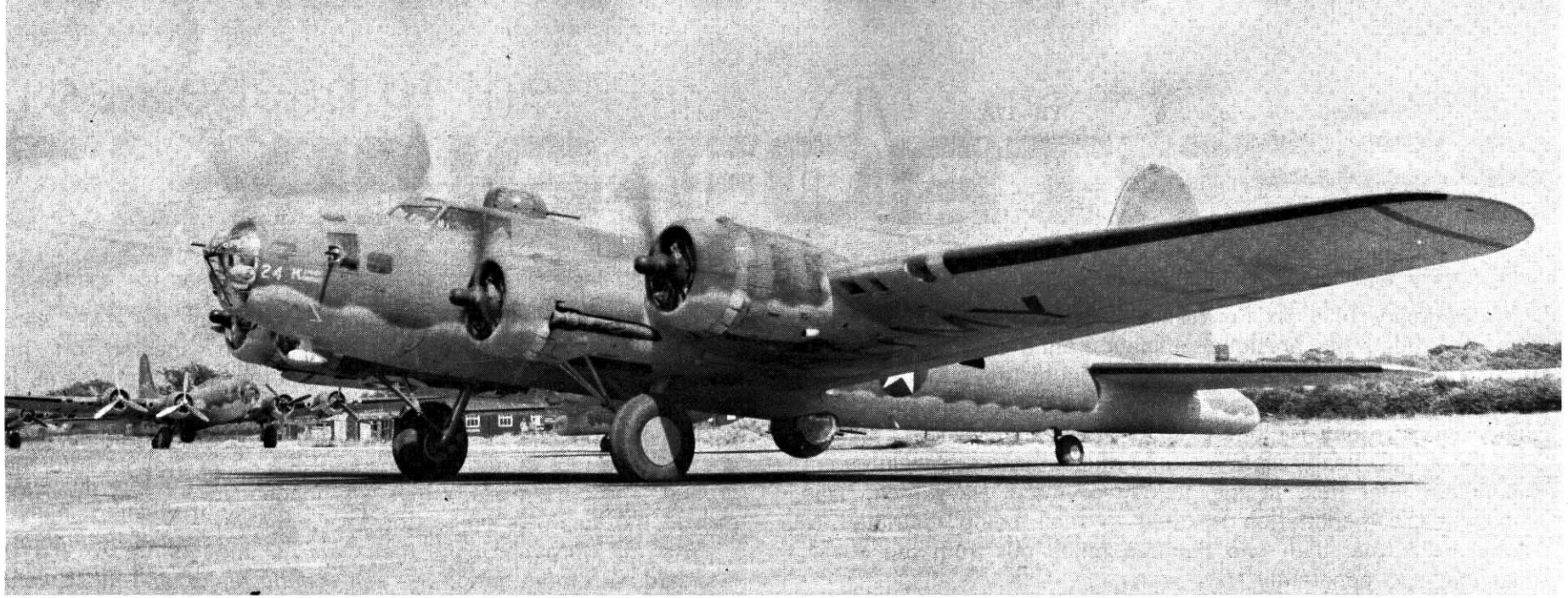
When the Lend-Lease agreement was made, the Royal Air Force asked for the Fortress, and got twenty of the next model, the **B-17C.** The American bomber would first see action with the British.



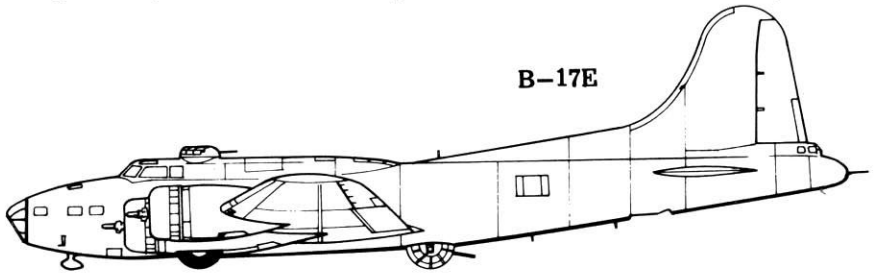
The results, due mainly to tactical mis-use by the RAF, were not far short of tragic. The first aircraft sheared off its undercarriage on landing in England, another fell to pieces as it landed after being shot-up over France, a force of three was wiped out on one mission, another accidently burned, yet another was lost during testing, and one dived straight into the ground. The guns froze, armor was inadequate. . .and the RAF passed the survivors on to Coastal Command.

The Air Corps brought their later C models up to **B-17D** standard with more armor and self-sealing tanks, and most went to the 19th Bomb Group's deterrent force in the Philippines. Half were destroyed during the initial Japanese attacks and the rest fought as best they could until only one was left - the famous **Swoose,** B-17D 40-3097.

The **B-17E's,** born of experience, were almost new aircraft. The rear section of the aircraft was entirely changed, with a huge, graceful tail and twin-gun tail turret. Fifty caliber Browning machine guns replaced the lighter .30 caliber guns in all but the nose positions, and the other modifications all added up to a machine which could carry out the daylight bombing role. First on the list of supply was the 7th Bomb Group in Java, the initial batch reaching them in January 1942. Their presence was immediately felt. The old and worn 19th Bomb Group got B-17E's, as did the 5th, 11th and 43rd Groups. But the B-17's days in the Pacific were numbered when Colonel Frank Armstrong swung himself aboard the 97th Group's **Butcher Shop** on August 17, 1942. Twelve B-17E's took off from Polebrook, England and bombed France, the first light jab of what was to become the Fortresses' fight.



King Kondor was an original 97th Bomb Group Boeing B-17E, and was part of the small force of VIII Bomber Command Fortresses which paved the way in Europe. In the background is **Peggy D,** one of the twelve ships which attacked Rouen on August 17, 1942. These early aircraft carried subdued personal markings and no group insignia.



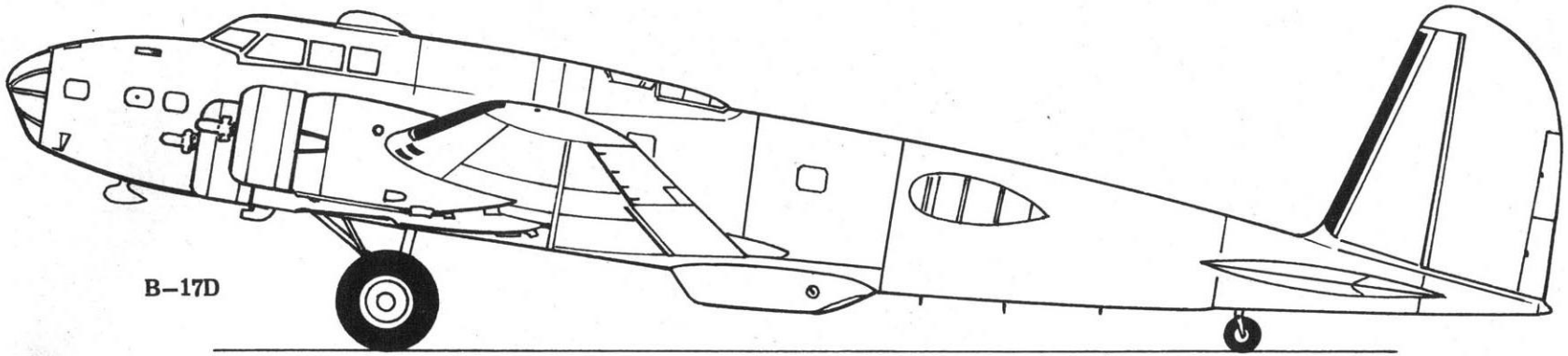
The B-17E's which bombed Rouen during that first 8th Air Force mission had had their cheek positions enlarged to provide better visibility, and this was a standard modification on B-17's fighting in Europe, and later standard on all B-17's through to the early **B-17G's.** A .50 caliber gun usually replaced the lighter nose guns, but there were always exceptions, and some 8th Air Force B-17's were equipped with a combination of both .30 and .50 caliber machine guns.

In May 1942 the last B-17E was produced, and two days later, on May 30, the first **B-17F** rolled out. Externally little different from the B-17E, it incorporated over four hundred changes. The main visual difference was in the nose, where the greenhouse effect of the B-17E was replaced by a one-piece Plexiglas nose, incorporating the optically flat bomb aiming panel.

Internally, there were very important changes. The B-17F had self-sealing oil tanks, extra wing fuel cells, (called Tokyo Tanks), improved brakes, better oxygen system, and so on.

B-17F's were produced by three companies - Boeing in Seattle, Douglas at Long Beach, and Lockheed-Vega at Burbank.

Forward firepower was a major problem for 8th Air Force Fortresses, and many variations on this theme appeared. One B-17F, **Bomb Boogie** of the 91st Group, had a unique extended



B–17D

cheek window which added to forward firepower, but not to the necessary extent. Twin nose guns, with a special frame for support, were tried, but the recoil was tremendous and the mounting was unwieldy. The ball-and-socket mounts provided in the Plexiglas nose piece were inadequate for direct forward fire, and the ultimate answer, or best answer, was a single gun recessed in a triangular cut-out at the tip of the glass nose.

Because it was the problem area, the nose of the B-17F was where most modification took place. One B-17F, 41-24548, serving with a 5th Air Force Troop Carrier Group as an armed transport, had a B-17E nose piece fitted. Cheek positions, purely a flush enlargement of one of the factory-fitted side windows on early B-17's, were improved by mounting a specially fabricated, bulged gun position.

Experiments were tried with twin waist guns, and even a 20mm cannon in the tail when German fighter attacks from the rear caused concern, but basically the B-17 remained a bomber equipped with thirteen .50 caliber machine guns in the three turrets and six or seven hand-held positions. The YB-40 project, involving heavily armed B-17F's for use purely as escorts, was a failure, but solved the forward firepower problem.

The YB-40's were fitted with a Bendix "chin" turret, and this was the salient feature of the final B-17 model, the **B-17G.** The chin turret was not the only difference, but it was by far the most important.

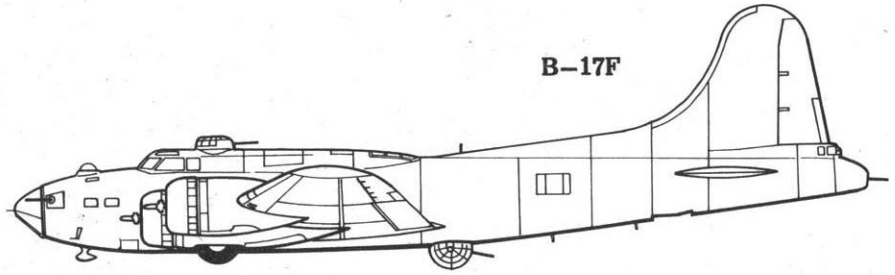
The first B-17G was delivered to the USAAF in September 1943, and the chin turret was warmly received. Only the sight and remote firing control were inside the nose; the twin guns, recoil dampers, and gun chargers were all housed in the turret beneath the nose. The guns had an excellent field of fire and the nose was left virtually unobstructed.

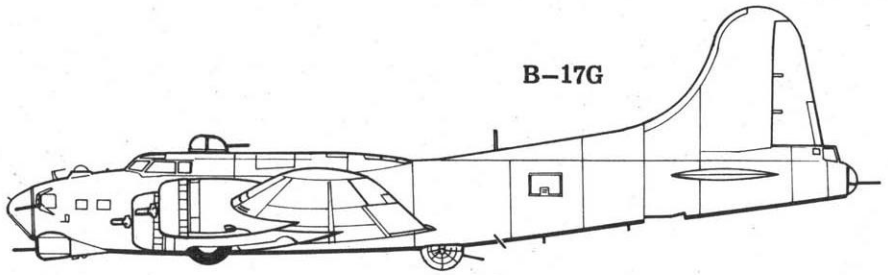
There were more than a score of "different" B-17G's, but it was not until the B-17G-90-BO, B-17G-55-VE, and B-17G-50-DL that the next recognizable change took place. This was the installation of the Cheyenne tail turret, which was a ball-like turret with a better field of fire and a reflector gunsight in place of the old ring and bead. This stubby, round turret decreased the Fortress' length by five inches.

The B-17G was also the first model to have enclosed waist positions, in place of the earlier hatch which had to be slid back before the guns could be swung out. These waist windows varied - there were both flush fittings and "bulged" fittings. The waist positions were also staggered to allow the gunners more movement.

The radio operator's single hand-held gun had been of dubious value and toward the end of 1944 it was abandoned on the B-17G. Like the waist positions, this gun emplacement had been enclosed to decrease discomfort on most B-17G's.

Being over a ton heavier than the B-17F, the B-17G suffered in comparative performance. While the B-17F was capable of nearly





300 mph at 25,000 feet, the B-17G was rated at 287 mph. With bombs and fuel and the necessities of formation flying the standard required was for B-17G's to be able to operate at 25,000 feet for about six hours at around 160 mph average speed.

Many B-17G's recorded notable mission tallies, but four aircraft in the 91st Bomb Group chalked up the incredible total of 537 missions between them. There was **Hi Ho Silver,** named because she was one of the first unpainted arrivals at Bassingbourn, standing out like a sore thumb in the olive drab formations. She made 130 missions and survived the war.

Wee Willie joined the 91st in the summer of 1943, and had flown 127 before April 8, 1945, when a flak hit ruptured a fuel tank, enveloping the aircraft in blazing gasoline. The shattered left wing folded back, broke free, and twelve seconds later **Wee Willie** was only fiery, scattered chunks of metal trailing wispy streamers of smoke. Somehow the tail gunner and co-pilot escaped, the sole survivors of a made-up crew of officers and enlisted men who needed just a couple more missions to complete their tours.

Outhouse Mouse, from the 323rd Squadron, carried four crews through their tours, bombed Berlin a dozen times, and flew a total of 139 missions.

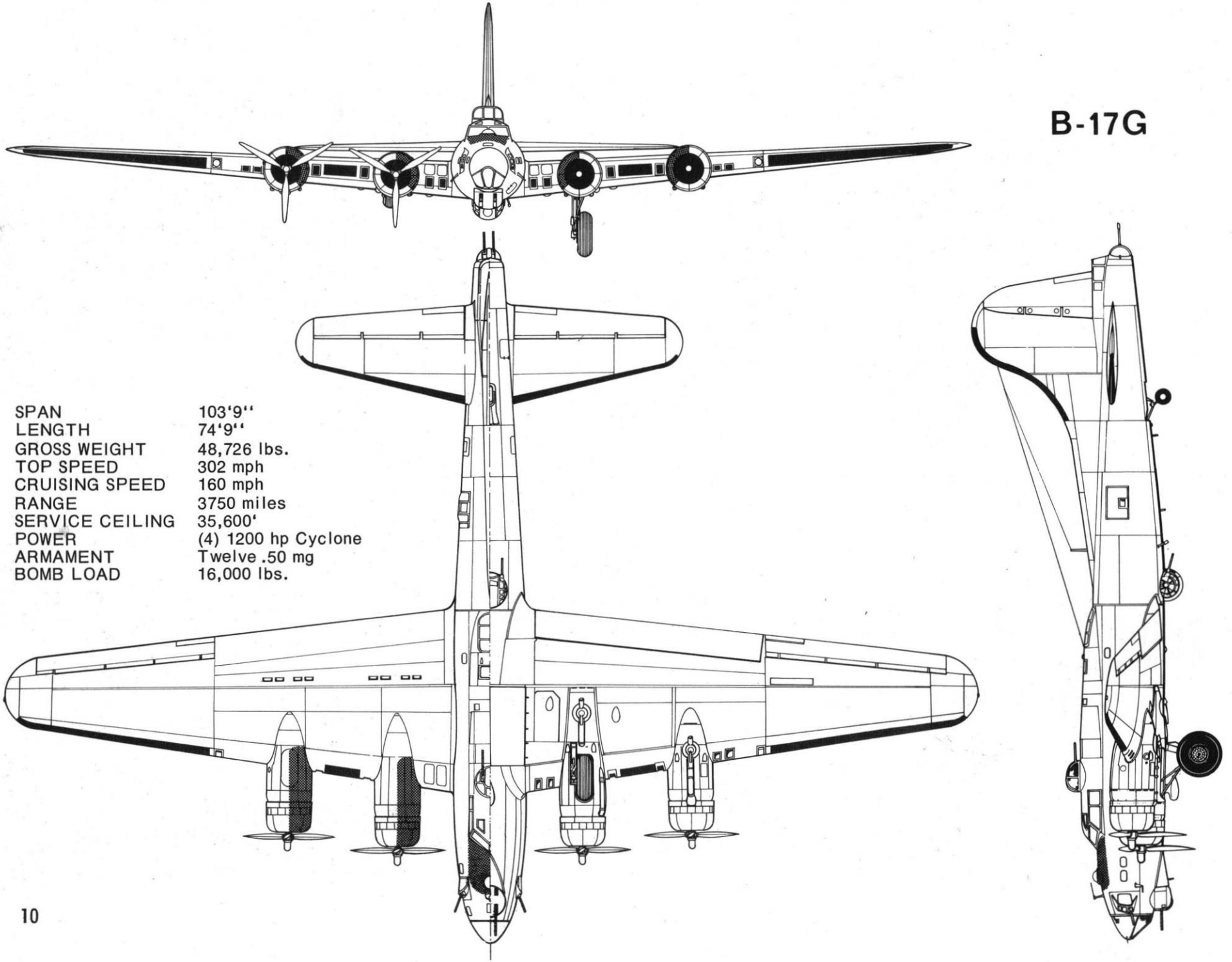
Nine-O-Nine flew her 140th mission on April 25, 1945, to just nose out her sister ship as the 91st's leading aircraft. This old B-17G was received at Bassingbourn on February 25, 1944, and flew her first mission five days later. By January 15, 1945 she had completed one hundred missions. She made Berlin eighteen times and in all her missions she never turned back once due to mechanical failure. In all she had twenty-one engine changes, four wing panel changes, fifteen main tank changes and eighteen Tokyo Tank changes. Her fuselage, wings and tail were highlighted by patches where she had been holed. To one crewman who flew in her she was "a big, dumb, tired aircraft which performed normally".

But for every **Nine-O-Nine** there were scores of Fortresses which never carried one crew through a tour. The Fortress was a lucky airplane, good to her crews, but some were luckier than others. The unwary were claimed quickly.

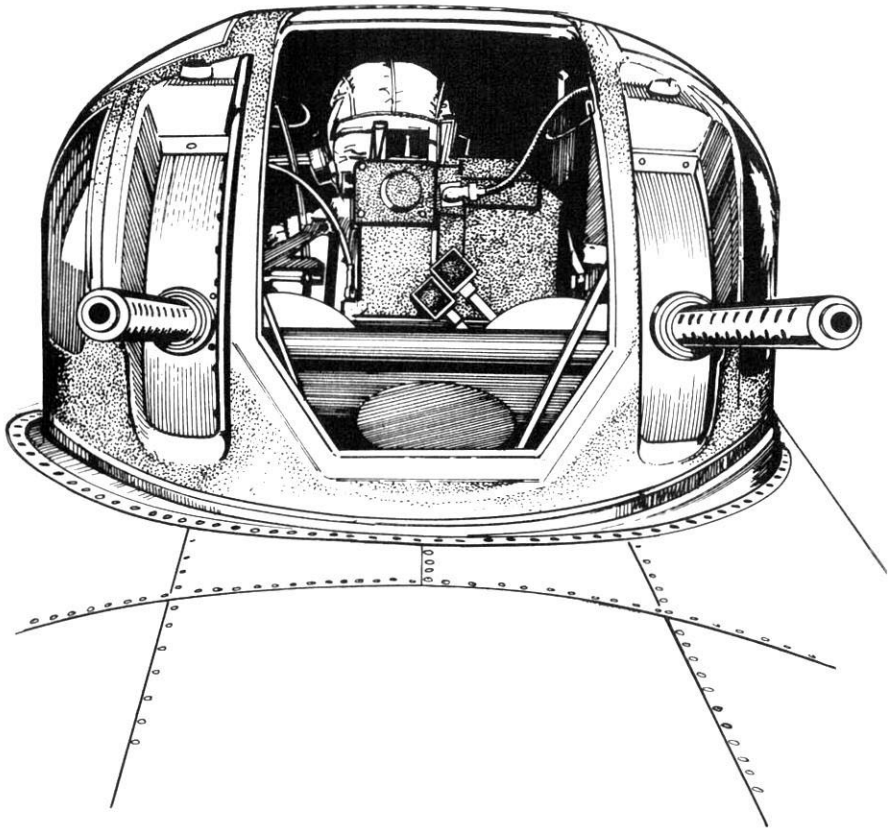
In all there were 12,731 Flying Fortresses - the Model 299, thirteen YB-17's, one YB-17A, 39 B-17B's, 38 B-17C's, 42 B-17D's, 512 B-17E's, 3405 B-17F's, and 8680 B-17G's. Now there are only a handful left.

The crew of **Blue Dreams,** 42-37751, has just survived the January 11, 1944 Oschersleben mission, one of the toughest of the war.

B-17G



SPAN	103'9''
LENGTH	74'9''
GROSS WEIGHT	48,726 lbs.
TOP SPEED	302 mph
CRUISING SPEED	160 mph
RANGE	3750 miles
SERVICE CEILING	35,600'
POWER	(4) 1200 hp Cyclone
ARMAMENT	Twelve .50 mg
BOMB LOAD	16,000 lbs.



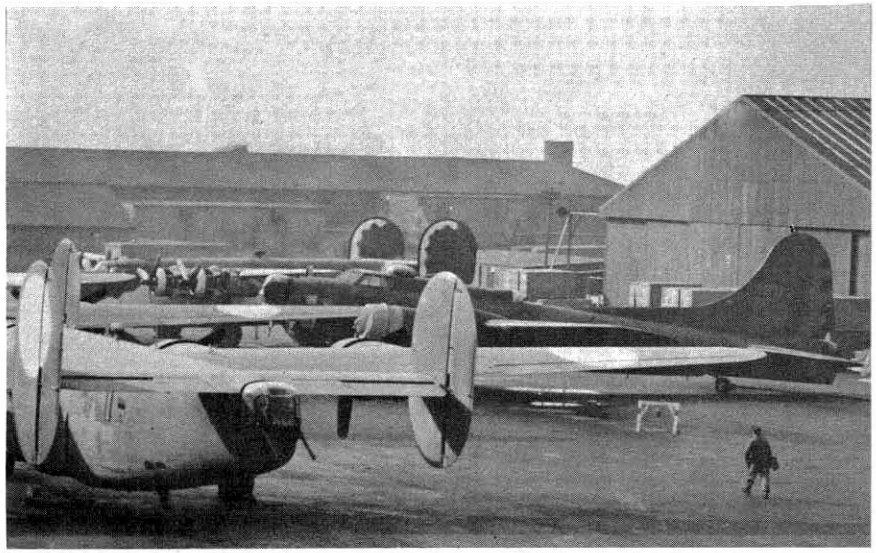
TOP TURRET B-17E

The B-17E's of the 11th Bomb Group fought a defensive war in the Pacific until the remnants were brought home and re-equipped with Liberators. **Ole Sh'asta** clearly shows the variety of nose gun combinations which could be installed in the B-17E's nose.

Spook!, also from the 11th Bomb Group. These B-17E's carried no group markings and were in the Boeing factory finish.

This old B-17E had many stories to tell. She is **Yankee Doodle,** the aircraft which carried General Ira Eaker on the first mission to Rouen. She was later attached to the 91st Bomb Group as a utility aircraft, and carried yellow 322nd Squadron codes. Group artist Tony Starcer added the painting of Uncle Sam to the original neat, yellow name. This B-17E was fitted with a 20mm cannon in the tail, but the experiment was abandoned when the recoil started popping rivets. The arrangement of B-17E, B-17F **Chennault's Pappy,** B-17G **Just Nothing** and unpainted B-17G **General Ike** was occasioned by the visit of General Dwight Eisenhower to the 91st base at Bassingbourn.

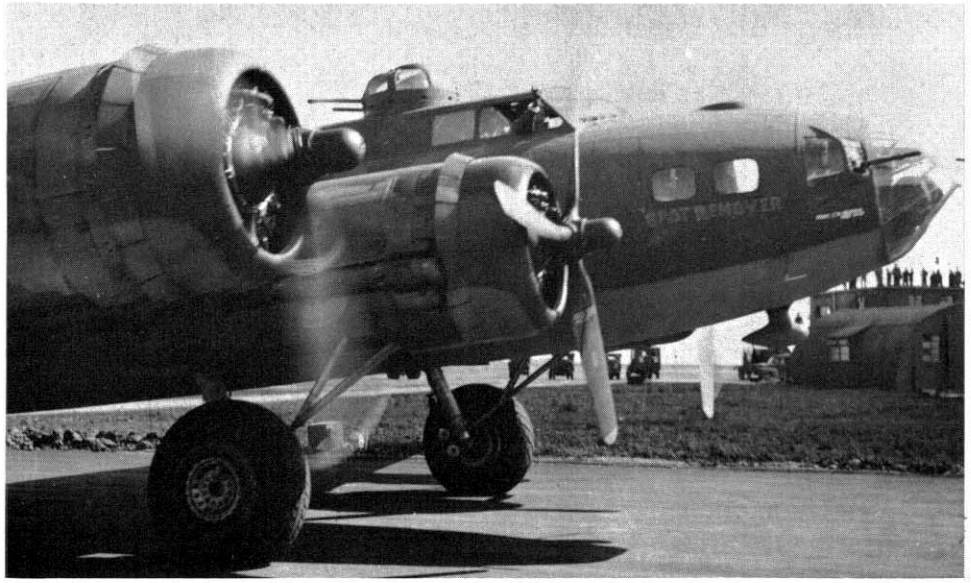
Major John C. Bishop, commanding the 323rd Squadron, 91st Group, celebrates the completion of his twenty-five missions by beating up Bassingbourn. His airplane is B-17F 41-24639, **The Careful Virgin.**



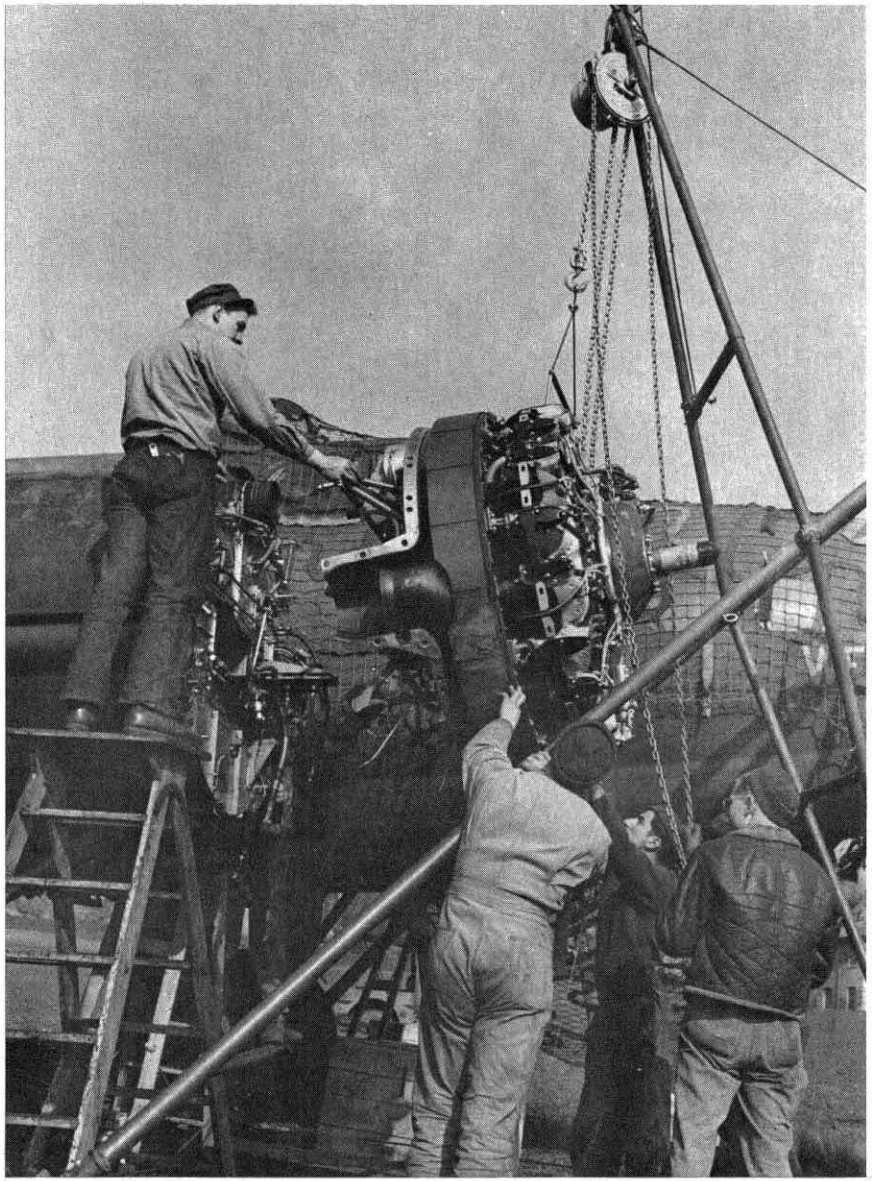
A lot of stories have been told about this B-17E, accidentally included in a photo of replacement B-24's. Serialled 41-9112 she arrived in England with the original 97th Bomb Group contingent and became an armament test bed. She carries a B-24 style nose turret, and tail position, along with other modifications, but her effect on B-17 armament was apparently minimal.

Werewolf limped home from Lille's flak and landed in a vegetable patch with only one engine operating. It was decided to fly her out, and while three engines were changed a two thousand foot runway was cleared.

A B-17F-40-BO from the 91st's 322nd Squadron takes off carrying external bombs. These racks increased bomb load, but were only suitable for the shorter missions. Squadron codes were yellow, and the fuselage insignia was outlined in red. The triangle on the tail, containing the group letter, was introduced around July 1943.

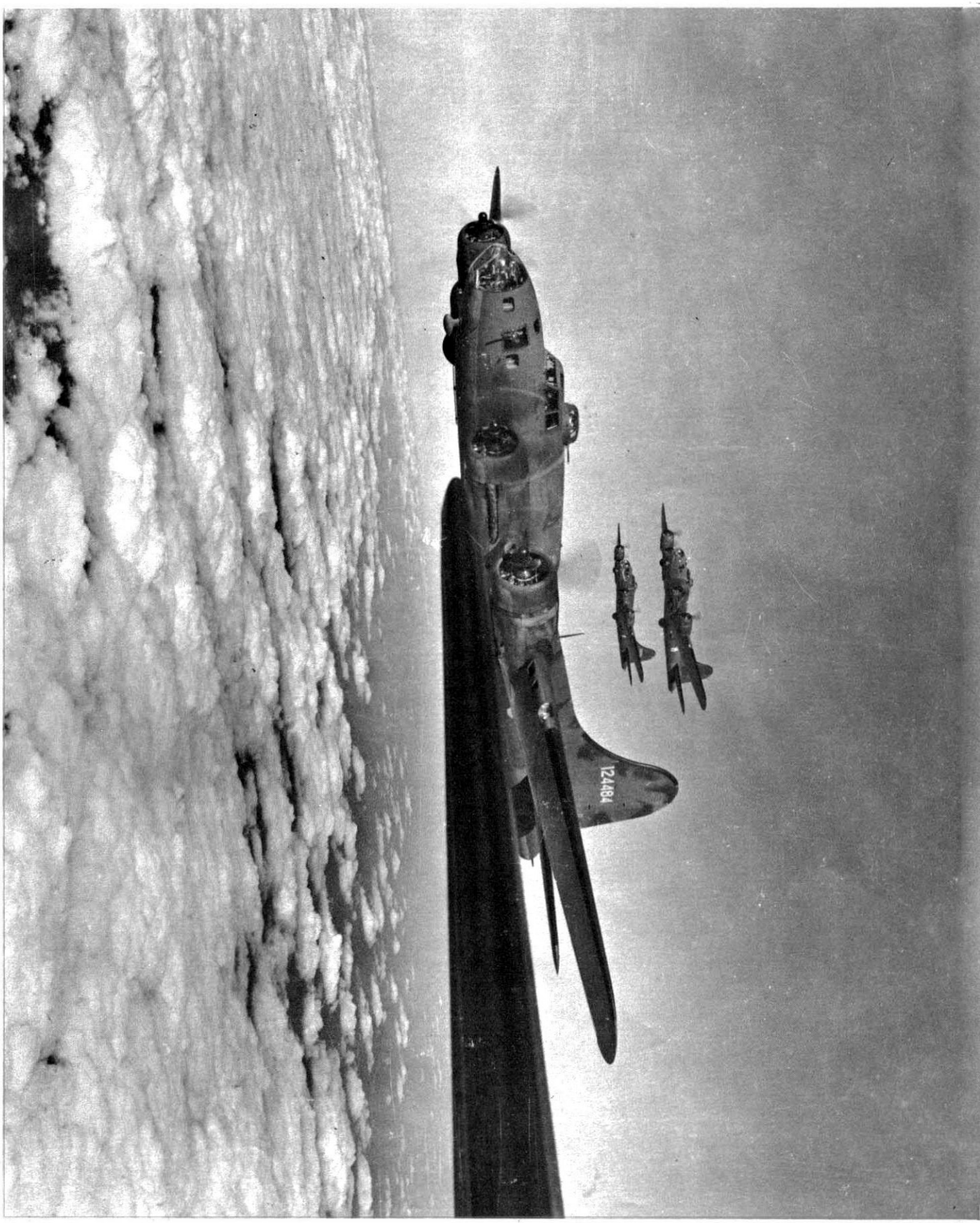


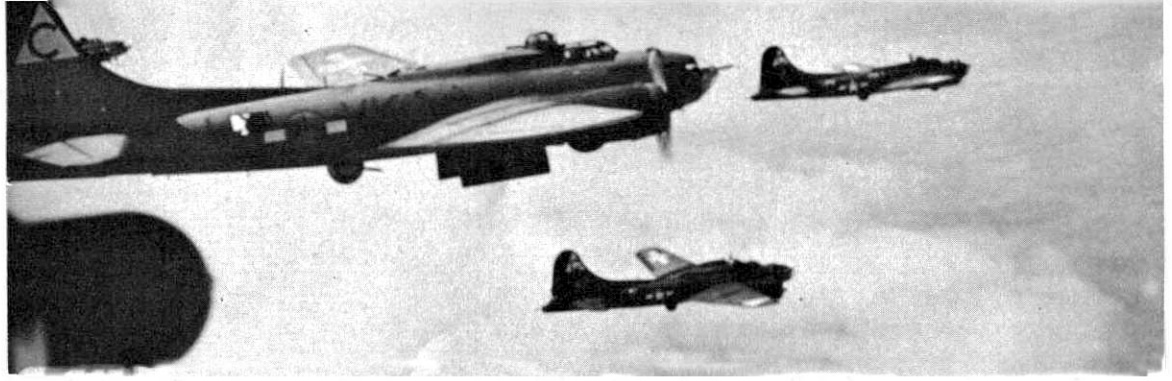
Spot Remover, from the 390th Bomb Group, taxies past in August 1943.



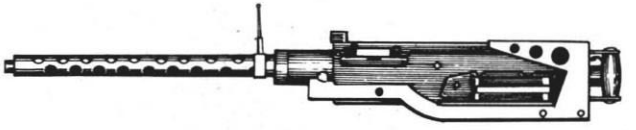
Members of a Mobile Repair Unit based at Dawlish, Devon, hoist the new #3 engine into place. **Werewolf**, a B-17F-27-BO, flew with the 358th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. Her pilot was Lt. George Oxrider.

This B-17F-10-BO, **The Bad Egg,** rolled off the Boeing production line just ahead of the famous **Memphis Belle.** She was one of seventeen 91st Group planes which fought through to Hamm in March 1943, after the rest of the attacking force had been recalled. She finally cracked up in Holland.

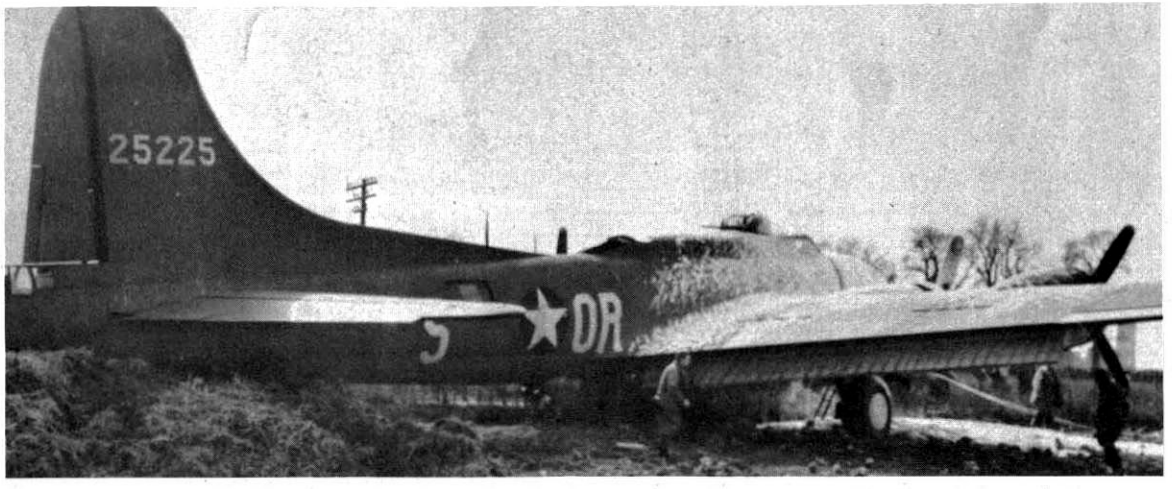




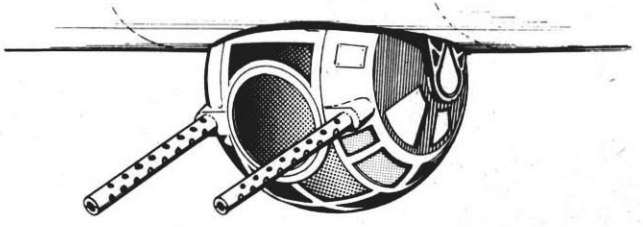
Charley Horse, 42-29571, was a B-17F-55-BO from the 358th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. She carries grey squadron codes (VK-L), but the aircraft letter on the tail is yellow. The circular C in the triangle appeared on a number of 303rd aircraft, but most carried the block C appearing on other aircraft in this September 1943 formation. (LIFE Magazine)



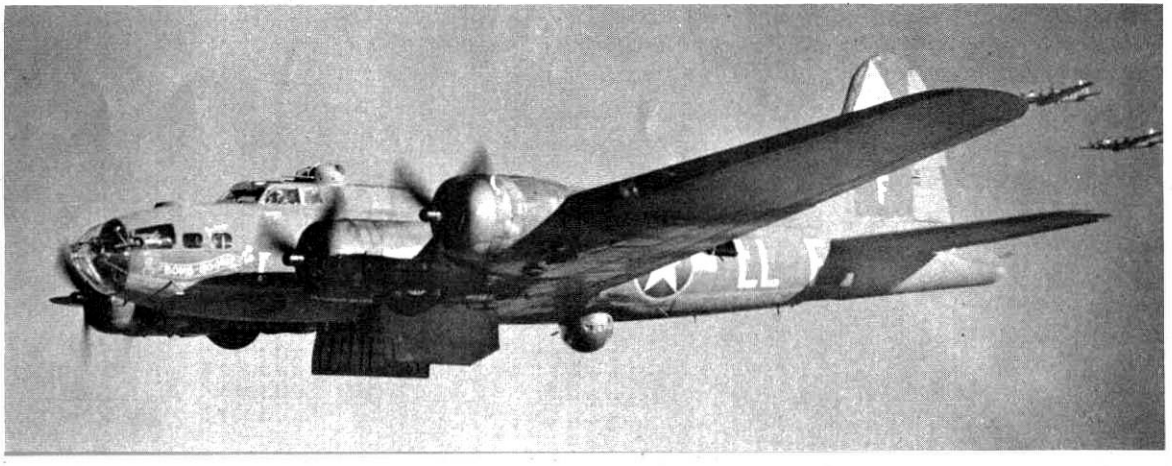
U.S. BROWNING .50 cal.
HEAVY MACHINE GUN



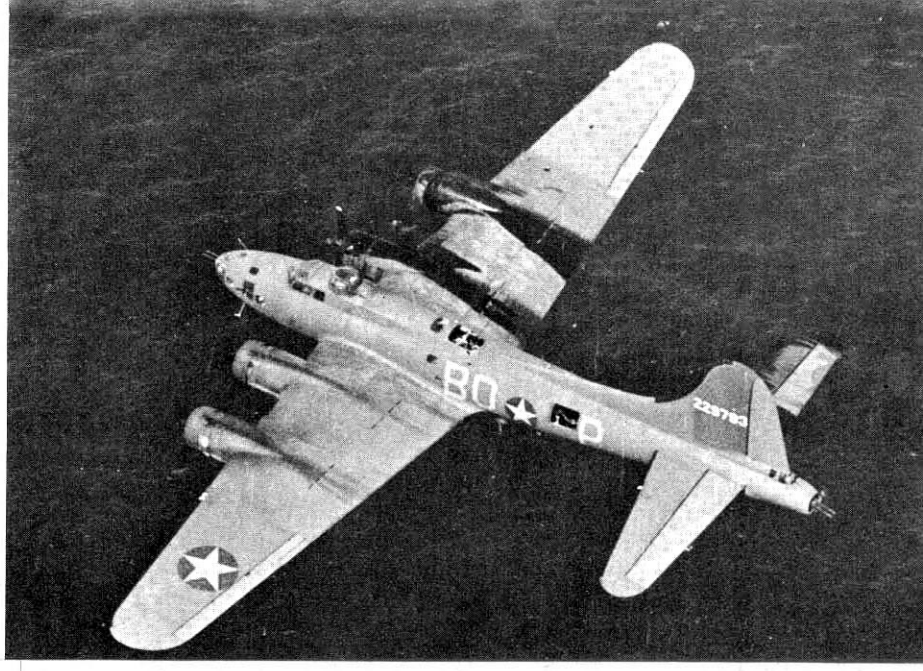
Stormy Weather of the 323rd Bomb Squadron after the March 4, 1943 Hamm mission. She was a B-17F-40-BO.



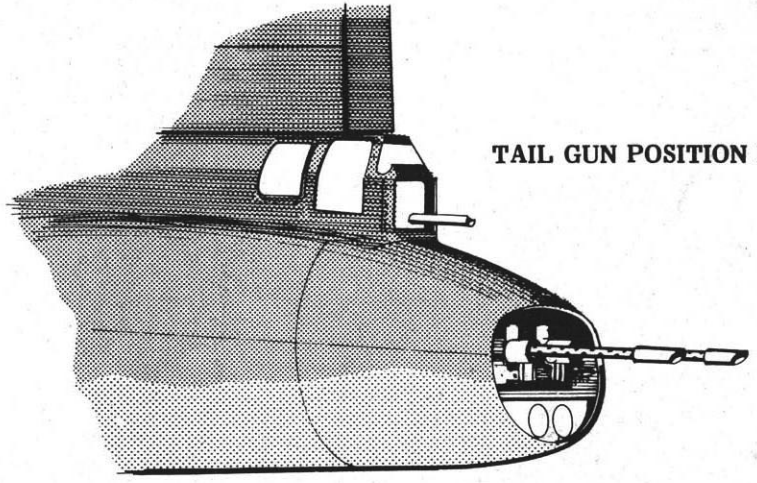
B–17 BALL TURRET



Bomb Boogie, 42-5763, the second-last B-17F-15-VE, was described by war correspondent John Steinbeck as a hard-luck ship. She has an unusually wide field-fitted cheek gun position. The nickname was painted in white and yellow.

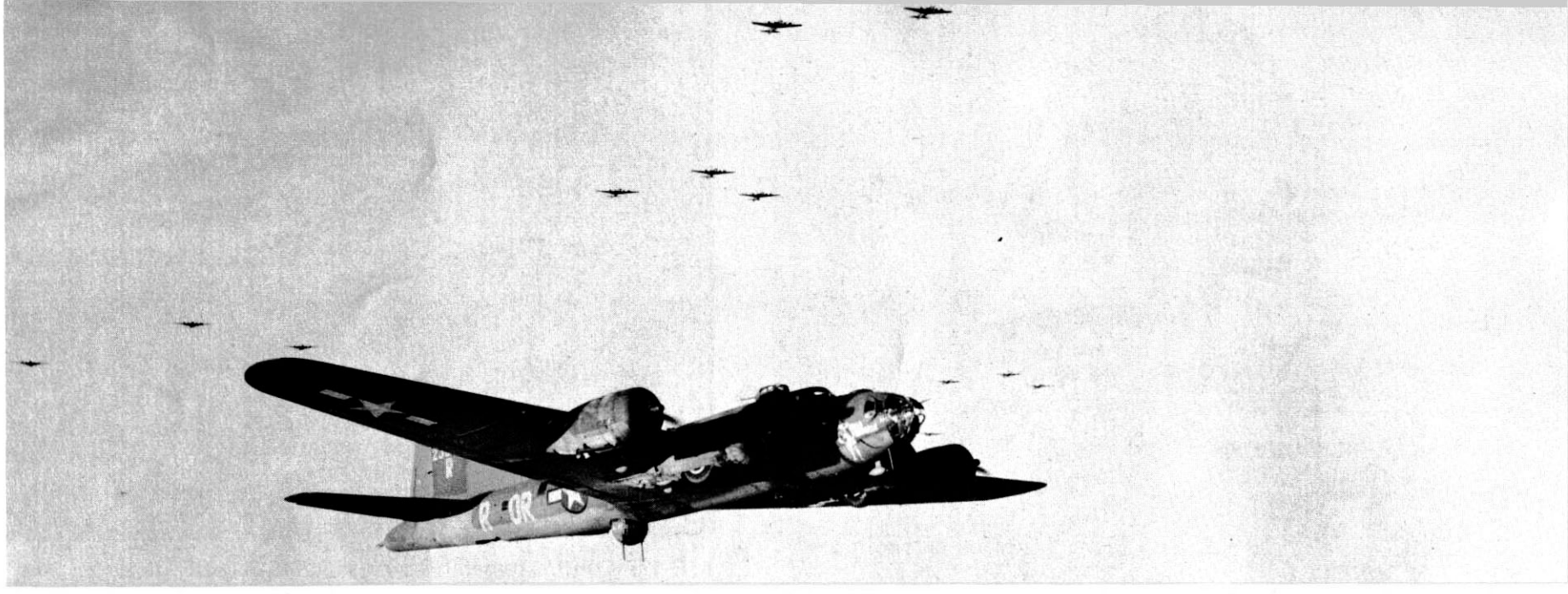


A B-17F-70-BO from the 306th's 368th Bomb Squadron, low and in trouble over the North Sea. Number three engine is feathered and number four streaming oil, but as long as fire did not take hold the crew had a very good chance of making it back to England.



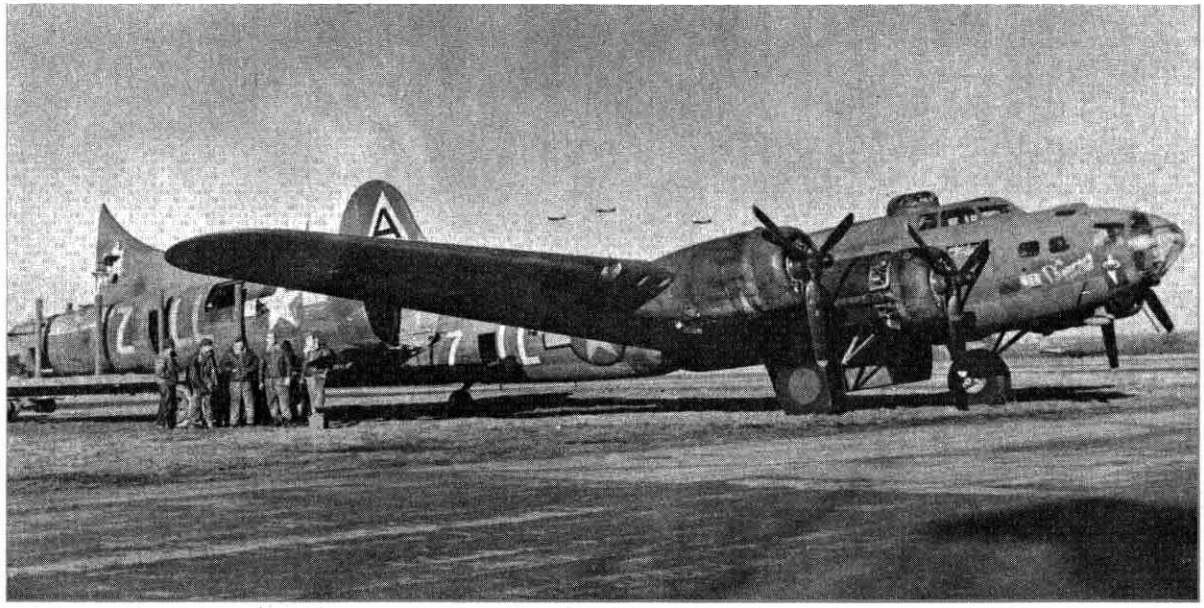
TAIL GUN POSITION B-17F

Fortresses could absorb heavy damage, and this 91st Group B-17F-65-BO got her share.

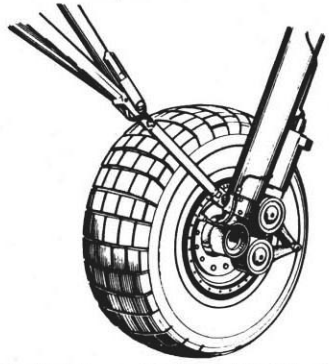


(Above & Left) B-17F **Miss Minookie** of the 91st Bomb Group.

With freshly applied white squadron codes and tail triangle, **The Village Flirt,** 42-29739, heads out over England.

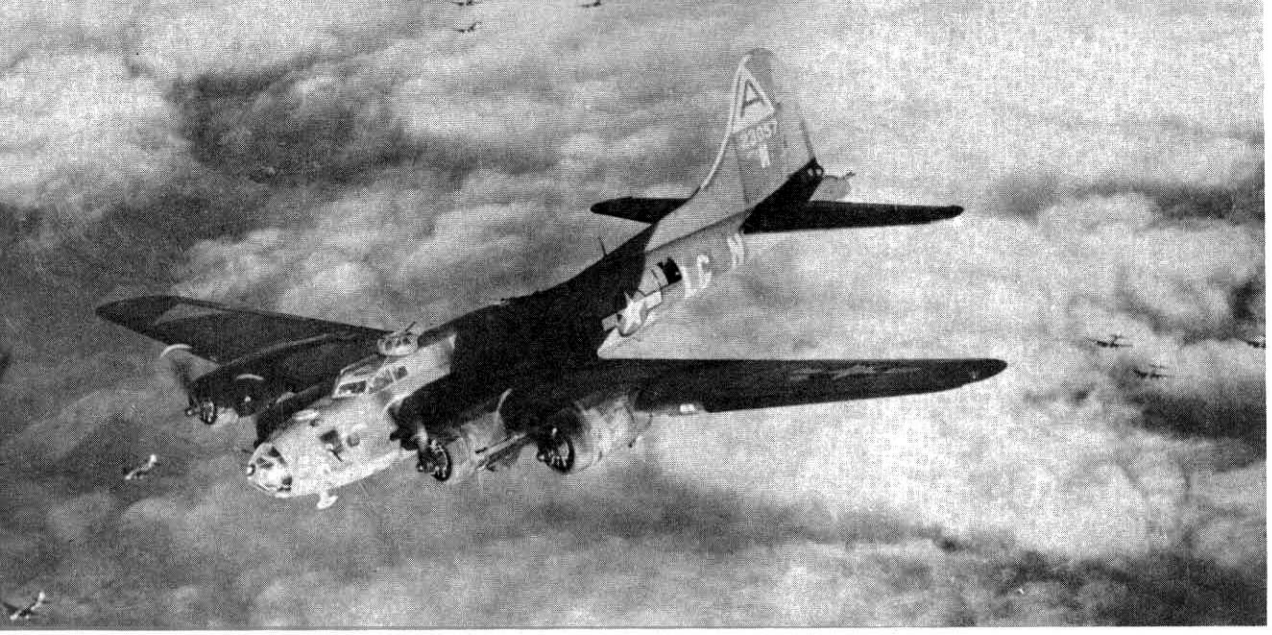


Major surgery was performed on many B-17's, and this work on the 91st's **Shamrock Special,** 42-29591, is an excellent example. She flew with the 401st Squadron.

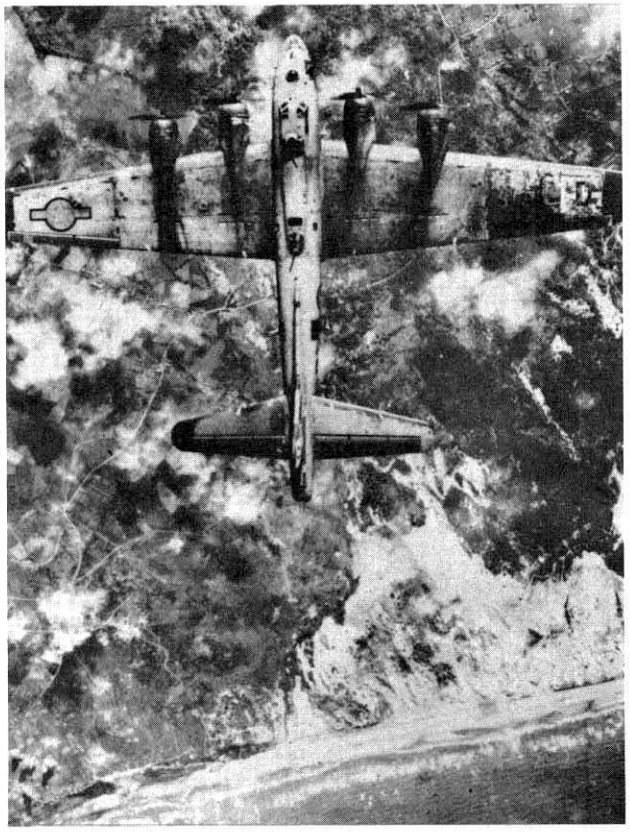


MAIN GEAR

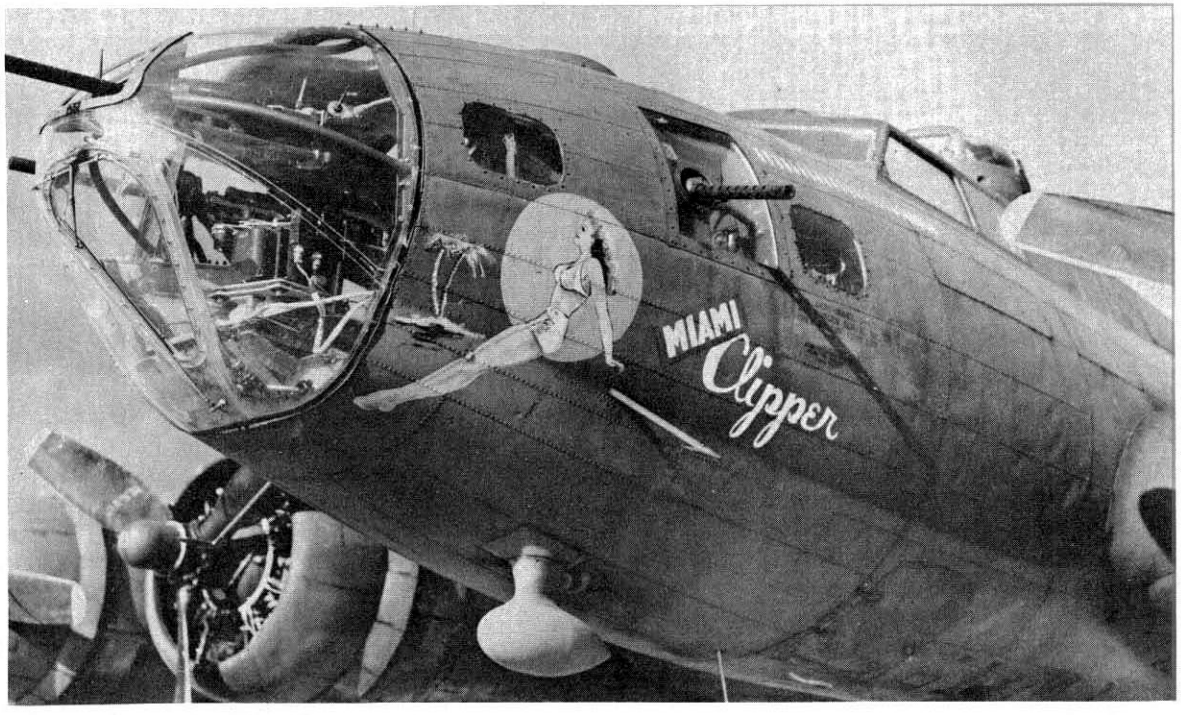
Virgin's Delight, a B-17F-50-DL from the 94th Bomb Group. This group flew with the Third Air Division, which used a square as identification.



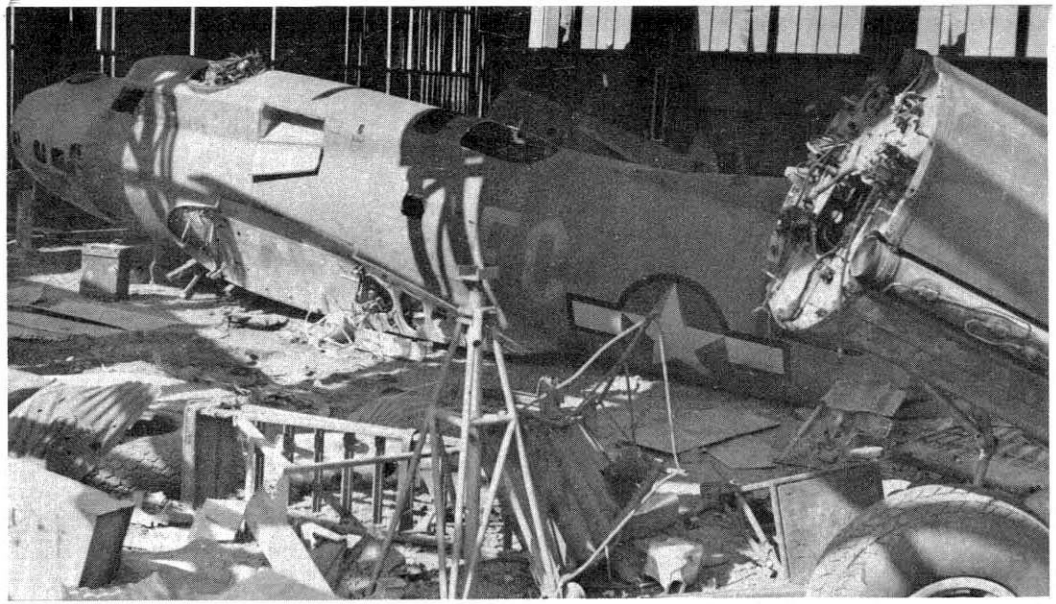
Blonde Bomber, a B-17F-20-DL which managed to survive until the January 11, 1944 Oschersleben mission.



This aircraft from the 100th Bomb Group is a perfect example of how battered B-17's became. The national insignia, outlined in blue after August 1943, has all but faded out, and the replacement right wing section has had the divisional marking painted over an earlier one.

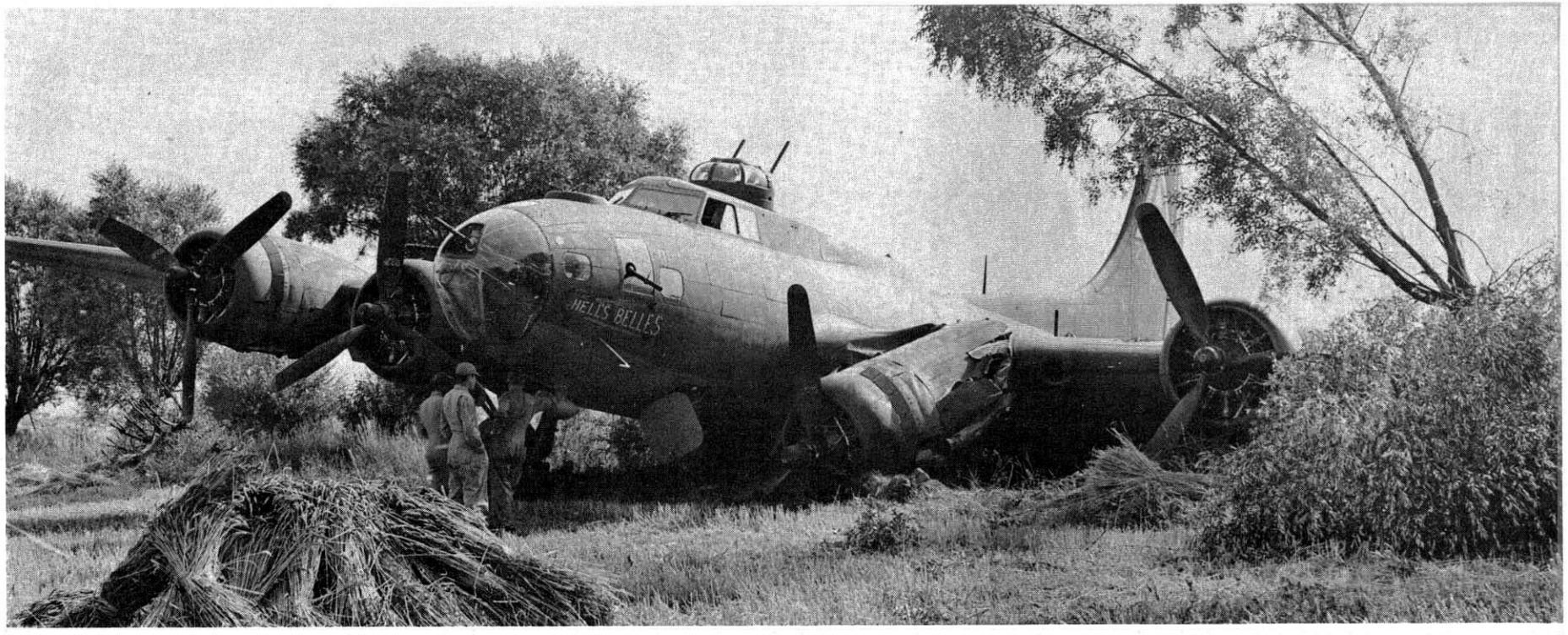


Miami Clipper, from the 91st Bomb Group. The Norden bomb sight is in place in her nose. She was a B-17F-20-BO, 42-29815.



This 571st Squadron, 390th Group B-17F was salvaged by the Germans as part of their project to rebuild B-17's. When the American army was closing in, this hangar near Chateaufort was destroyed by the enemy, then abandoned. It appears work had begun on this aircraft, with the addition of a nose from another Fortress.

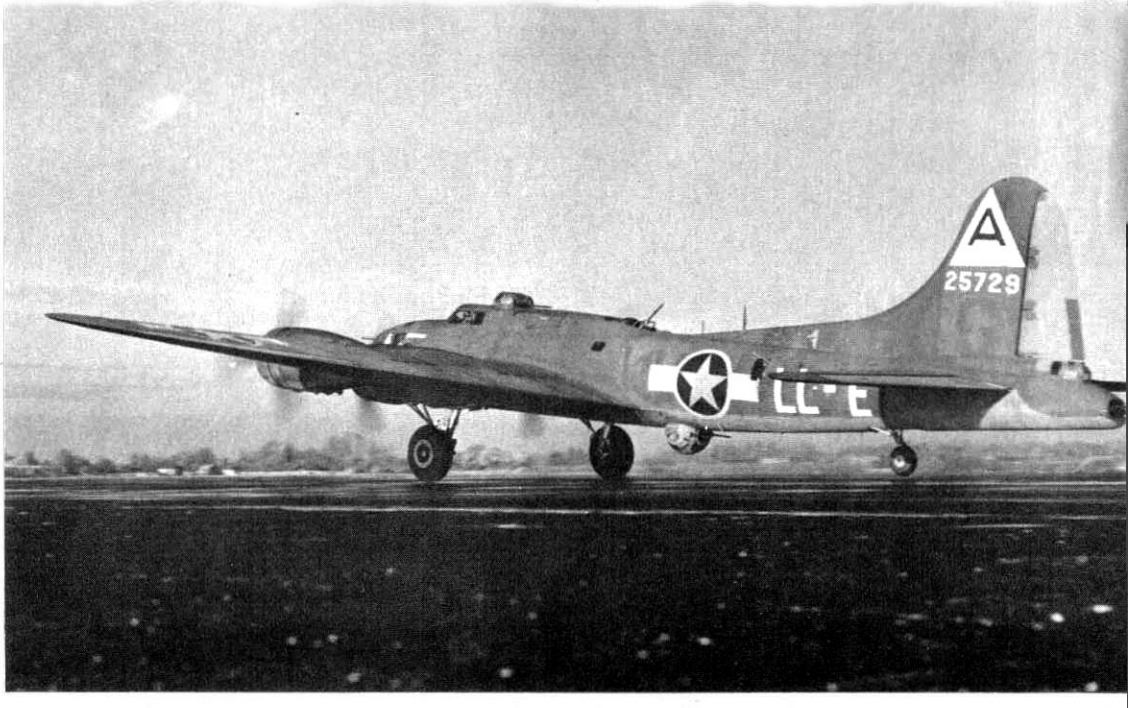
A B-17F-90-BO, 42-30157, **Hell's Belles** overshot the runway at Bassingbourn in July 1943, completely wrenching the #2 engine from its mounting.



B-17F-100-BO 42-30383 of 94th Bomb Group. September 15, 1943.

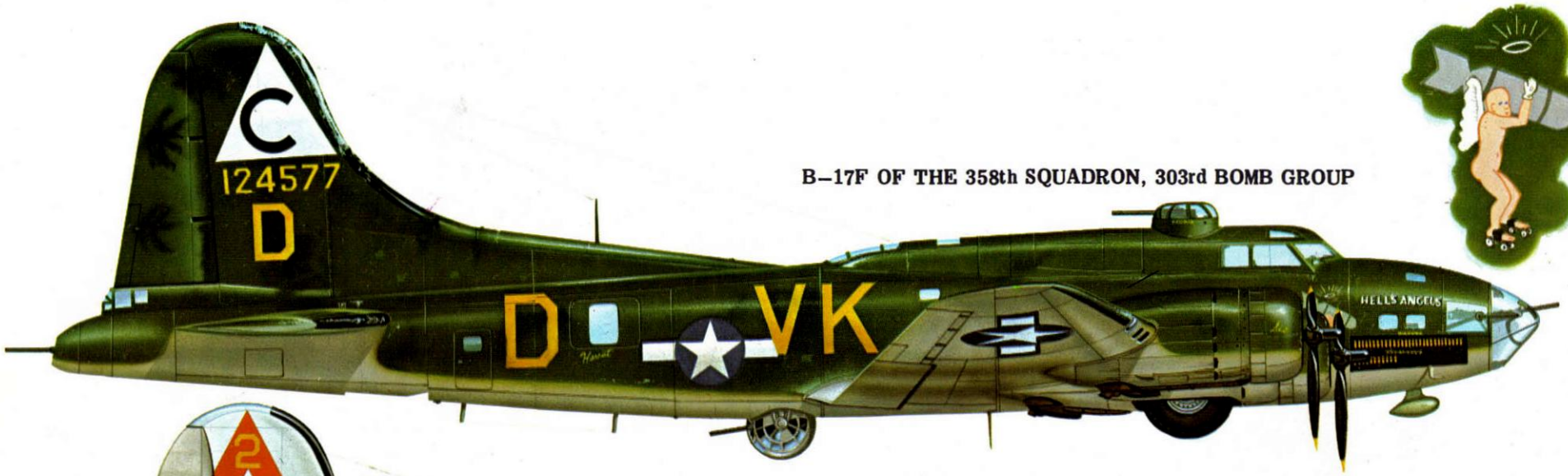
A 323rd Squadron B-17F-5-VE in unusual camouflage, believed to be dark green over olive drab. The markings trace the evolution of 91st Bomb Group and 8th Air Force insignia. The star-and-bar is outlined in red, although the bars are the less-visible dulled white. The fuselage codes are in yellow, grouped behind the national insignia due to the addition of the bars to the original circle. The earlier OR, forward of the national insignia, has been painted out, as has the aircraft letter which appeared just aft of the waist window.

The 305th Group's **Patty Ann,** a B-17F-115-BO, on the September 6, 1943 Stuttgart mission. She carries the white squadron codes of the 366th. White replaced the earlier gray letters on many aircraft in this unit.

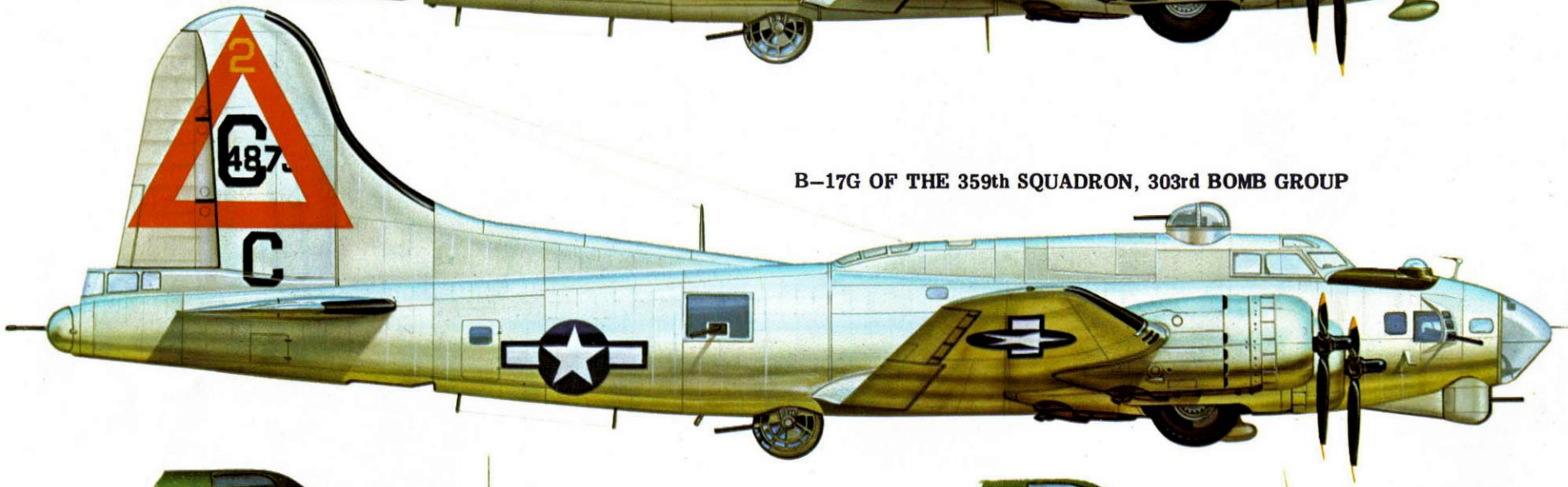


Like many 8th Air Force B-17's, 42-5729 shows evidence of earlier markings. She is the fifth B-17F-10-VE, and it was from this block of twenty aircraft that the thirteen gunship YB-40's came. However, the first seven were not converted, contrary to some reports. This photograph clearly shows the mounting for the single gun fired by the radio operator.

The Uncouth Bastard, from the 305th Bomb Group. The flash-guards on the guns indicate she was probably from the 422nd Squadron, on special night leaflet dropping operations.



B–17F OF THE 358th SQUADRON, 303rd BOMB GROUP



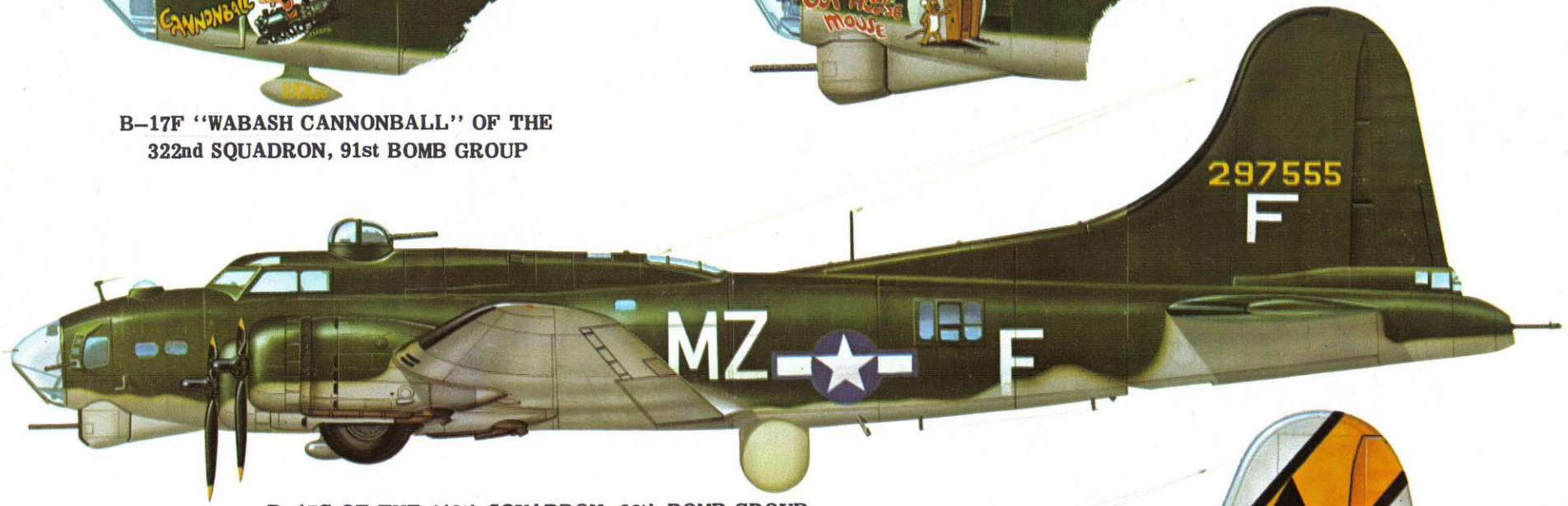
B–17G OF THE 359th SQUADRON, 303rd BOMB GROUP

B–17F OF THE 91st BOMB GROUP

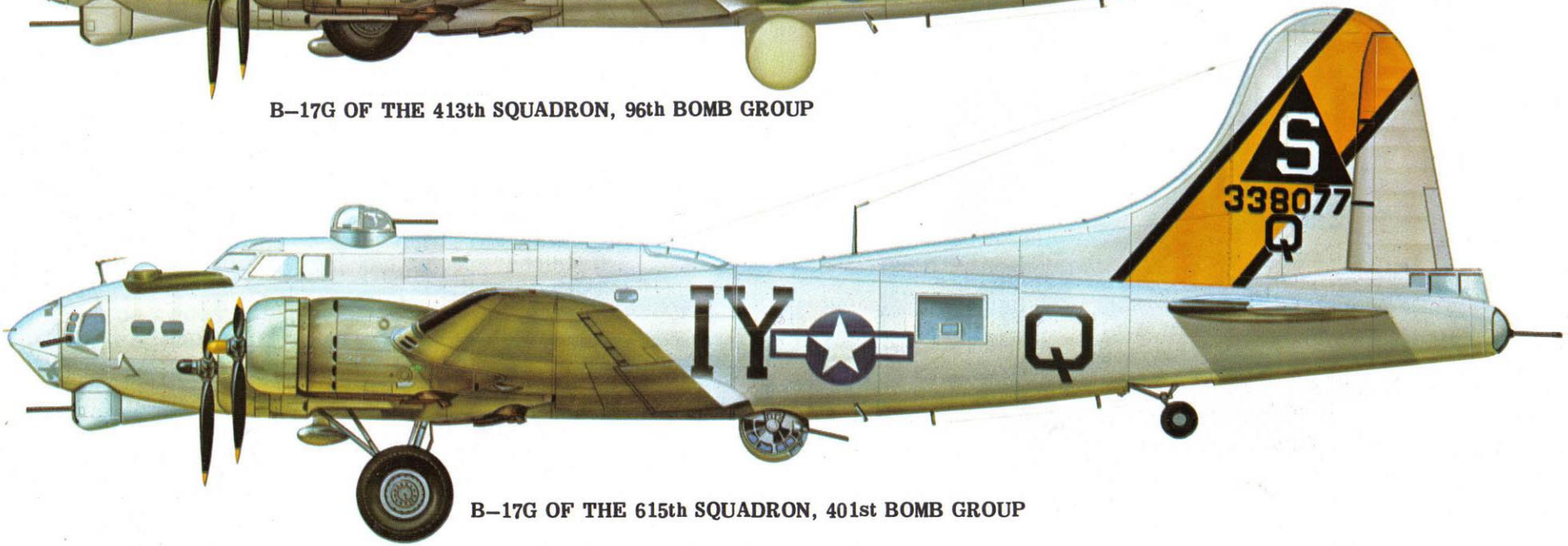
B–17F

B–17F "WABASH CANNONBALL" OF THE
322nd SQUADRON, 91st BOMB GROUP

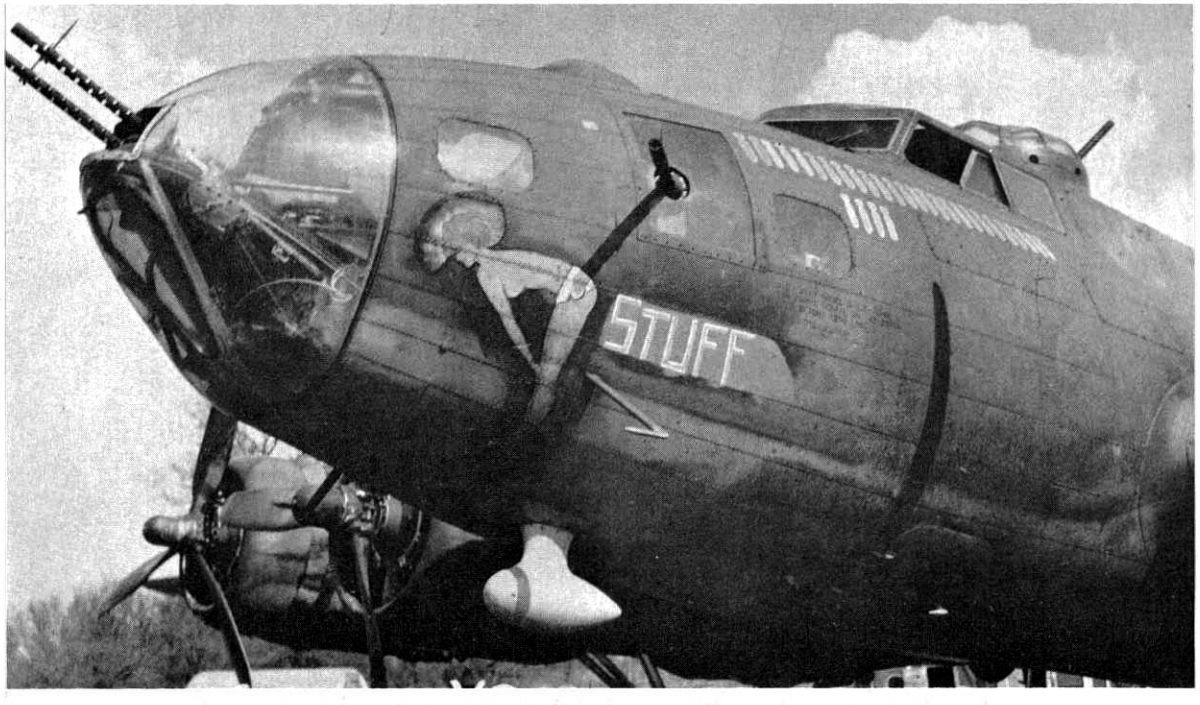
B–17G "OUTHOUSE MOUSE"
OF THE 323rd SQUADRON



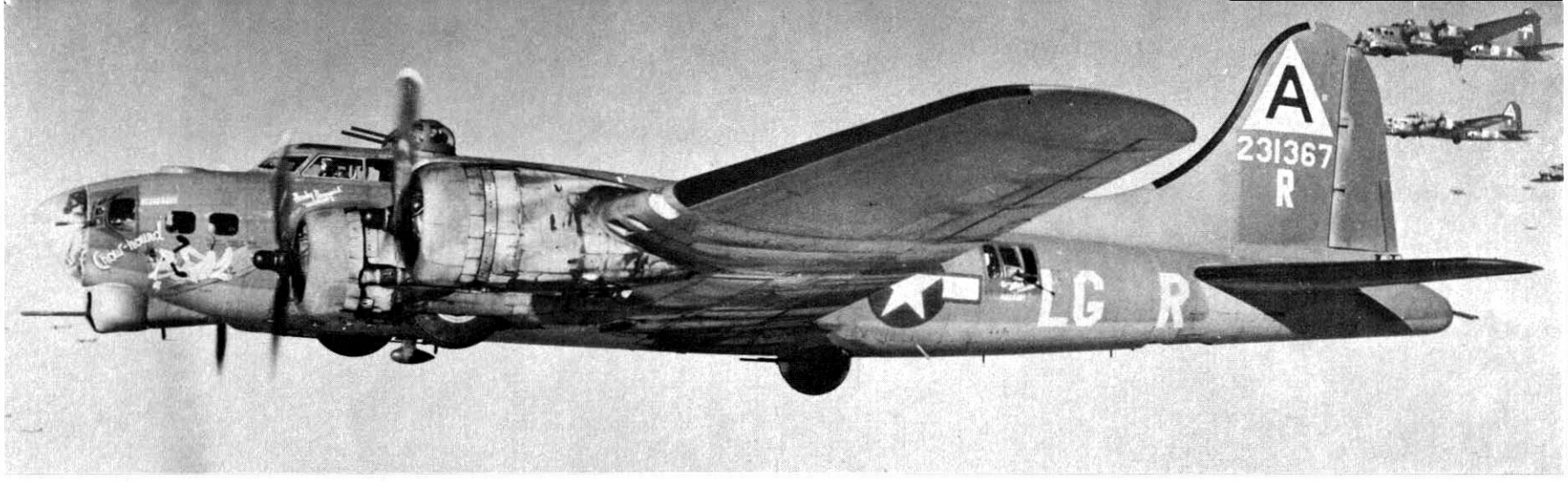
B–17G OF THE 413th SQUADRON, 96th BOMB GROUP



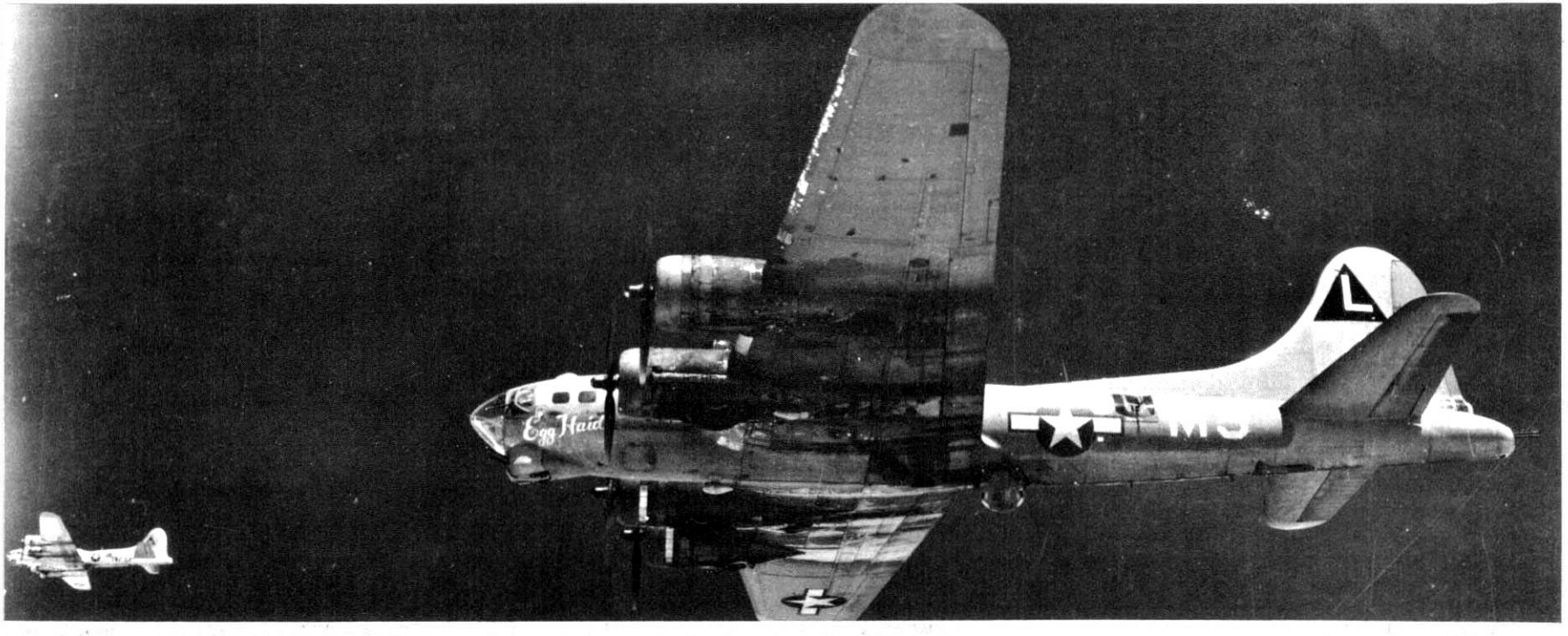
B–17G OF THE 615th SQUADRON, 401st BOMB GROUP



Nicknames on 8th Air Force Fortresses were a harmless form of ribaldry which never ceased to rouse the ire of the narrowminded. The crew of this B-17F-70-BO from the 381st's 534th Squadron called 42-29751 **Mis-Abortion,** but someone evidently objected. So they changed it to the apparently acceptable **Stuff,** which must have amused those with a knowledge of English expressions. In common with the rest of her group, this aircraft carried squadron codes on the fuselage, and aircraft letter on the tail.



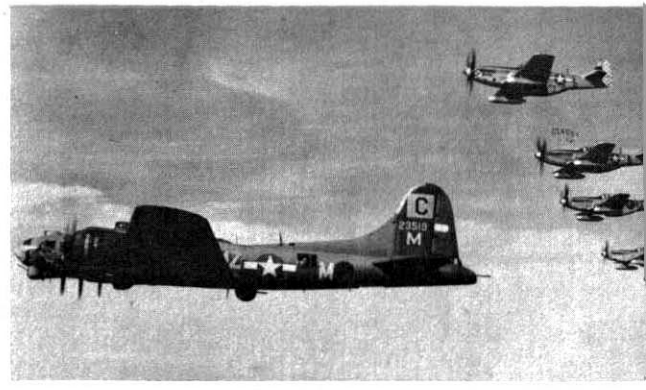
Jerry Newquist's **Chow Hound,** from the 322nd Squadron of the 91st Bomb Group, in March 1944.



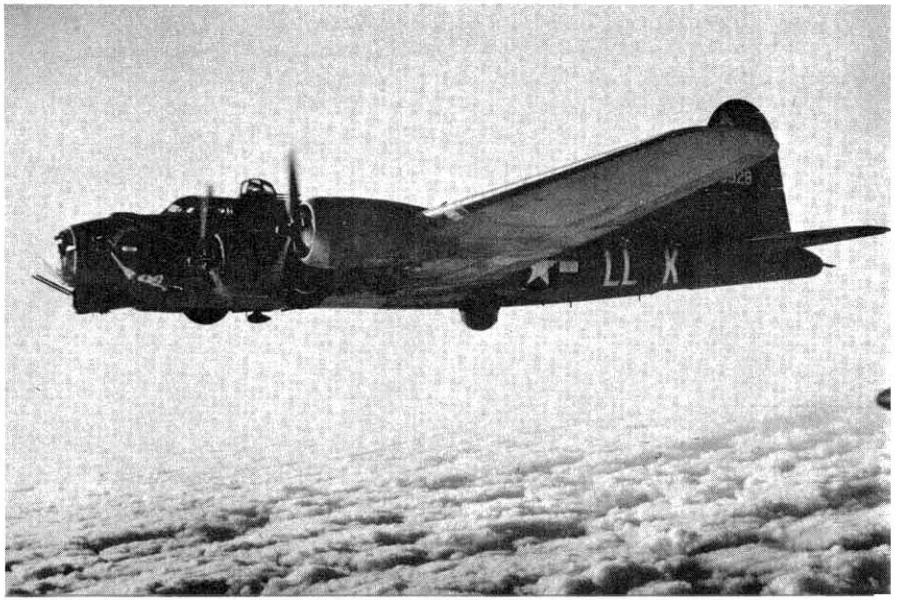
Egg Haid, a grimy B-17G-15-VE from the 535th Bomb Squadron, 381st Group, based at Ridgewell in Essex. The aircraft on the left is a red-tailed Fortress from the 398th Group, with her codes N7-G closely grouped aft of the national insignia. The 'bulging' of the enclosed waist windows can be clearly seen in this photograph.

Pist'l Packin' Mama was a B-17G-10-DL, the first of the Douglas B-17G's to be produced in quantity. Early B-17G's went into combat without the usual cheek gun positions. There is provision for the older ball-and-socket mounting in the center window.

(Far Right) A B-17F-75-DL, one of the seventy-six Douglas B-17F's fitted with chin turrets, from the 413th Squadron of the 96th Bomb Group. The squadron codes are in gray, but the aircraft letter is in white on the tail and fuselage. The P-51's are from the 3rd Scout Force.



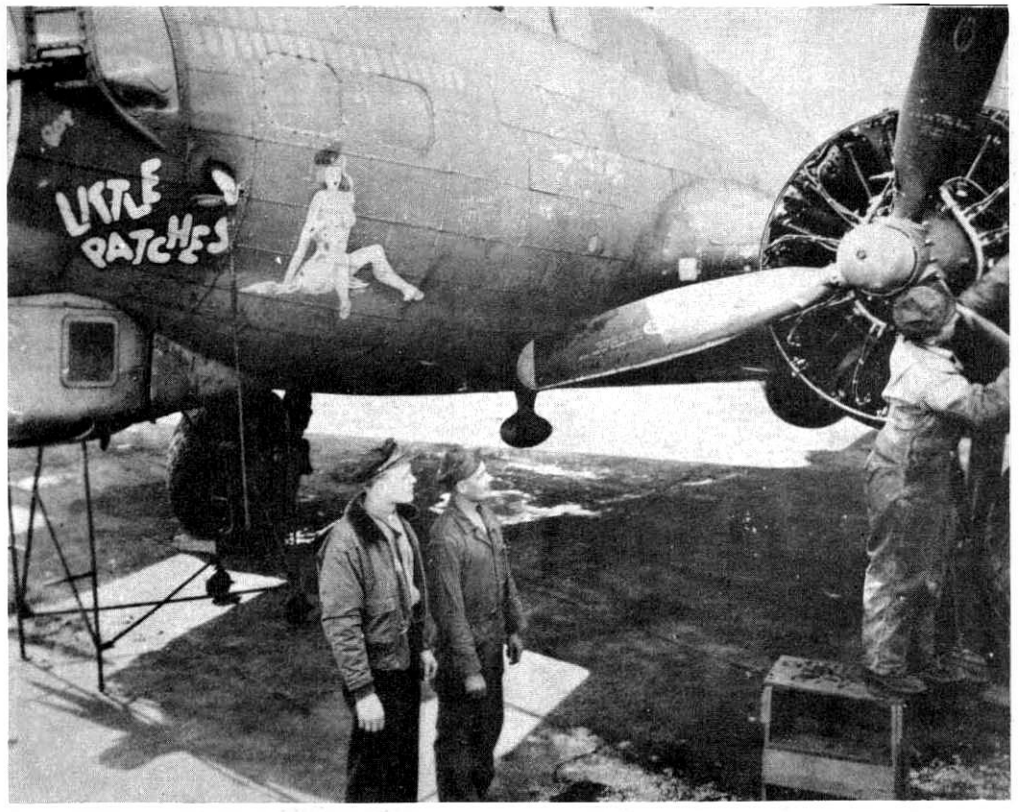
'Never satisfied' a B-17F-50-BO 42-5389 of 348th Bomb Squadron, 99th Bomb Group.



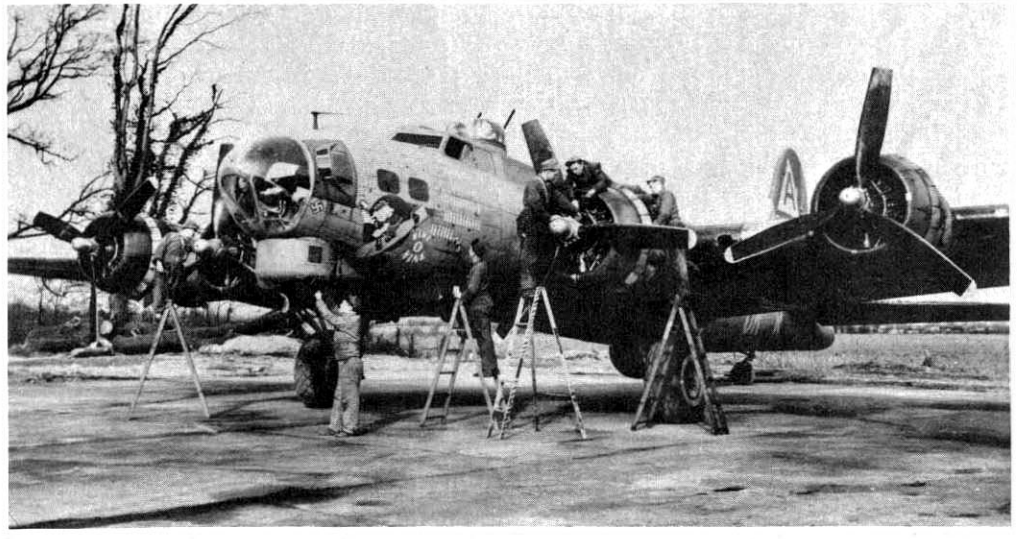
Lackin Shackin, a B-17G-5-VE serialled 42-39929, was on a mission to Stettin on April 11, 1944. Near Hanover a cluster of flak knocked out the two outboard engines. She limped along, then the left inboard engine gave trouble. The crew decided their only chance was neutral Sweden. Ten miles in from the sea, over what they thought was Denmark, a German Me210 attacked. The German missed and fired into a Swedish artillery post. The Swedes fired back and hit the Luftwaffe plane. **Lackin Shackin** circled the burning Messerscmitt and headed east. A warning shot hit the B-17 and the crew bailed out, except for pilot Frank Ammon, who looked for somewhere to put the Fortress down. He missed a field of flowers and bellied into a plowed field, crashing through a stone wall. He walked out, dazed and pleasantly surprised to find he was near Ystad, Sweden.

Corporal Tony Starcer adds the finishing touches to the decoration of LL-B, 42-97061, the famous **General Ike.** Eisenhower visited the 91st Group's base in April 1944 and christened the aircraft with a bottle of Mississippi river water. Starcer painted art on most of the group's aircraft, including the famous quartet - **Nine-O-Nine, Hi Ho Silver, Wee Willie** and **Outhouse Mouse.**

Pilot Bill Major talks over the work on **Little Patches** with his ground crew. This B-17G-20-BO carried the code letters LL-L and serial number 42-31578.

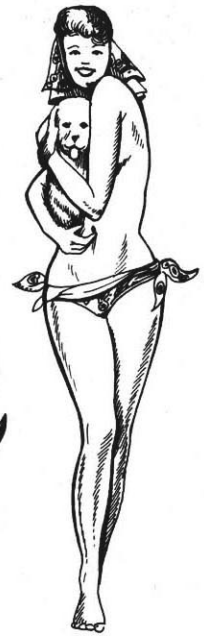


One of the most famous and toughest B-17's in the Eighth Air Force, the 91st Group's **Nine-O-Nine.** In all she completed 140 missions, an enviable record. She was named simply for her serial number, 42-31909, and her ball and tail turrets were fleece-lined.



Times A-Wastin', LL-D, 42-102504 of the 91st's 401st Bomb Squadron. Bert Stiles records in **Serenade to the Big Bird** that the name "didn't strike any deep chord" in him, but the ground crew made the choice, as was often the case. Stiles flew with Sam Newton's crew, and the plane later changed hands and took Ed Garner's crew on their last twenty-five missions.

LITTLE Miss Mischief



Little Miss Mischief was back from Cologne, on October 15, 1944. She had been one of many B-17's carrying out the second of three daily attacks on this prime industrial target. Her fuselage was blasted open, her ball turret so mangled that it was inconceivable that the gunner could have survived.

Paul McDowell, from Nebraska, was the second owner of **Little Miss Mischief.** As far as he was concerned she was too damned slow. She had suffered wing spar damage on an earlier mission, but a couple of new engines had brought her closer to standard. So on October 15 McDowell was staring through his thick windscreen, flying one more long mission. Then a rudder pedal went limp.

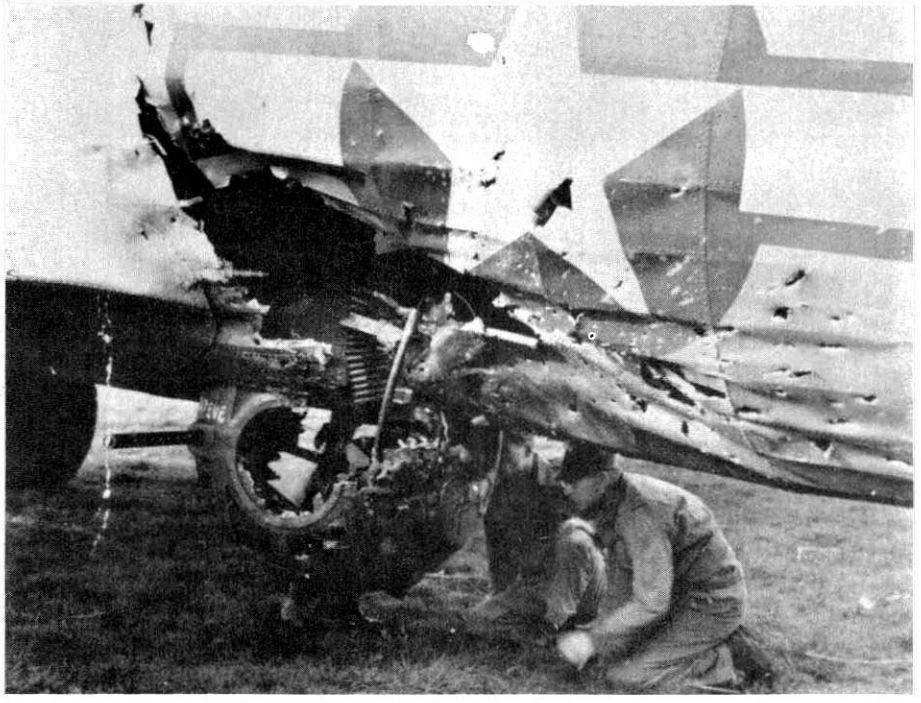
The interphone was out too, but up on the flight deck McDowell and his co-pilot, Herman Balaban, didn't know what was happening. Sergeant James Hobbs, the engineer, dropped down from his bicycle seat beneath the upper turret and squeezed back through the bomb bay,

past the radio room, and into the aft section of the ship. A minute later he returned, his eyes bulging. McDowell caught something about "big hole back there". When he went back to look and found it was big enough to push a calf through he recalls being "impressed". The bombardier went back to check it out, ran out of oxygen, came back already effected by an overdose of nitrogen-heavy air, and insisted they must all bail out immediately. Slapped back on oxygen he quickly reconsidered.

The right waist gunner, Glenn Slaughter, had felt the metal beneath his feet erupt, throwing him from his gun. He lay there, looking down to the ground through scores of large, small and medium sized holes all around him. Unable to believe he was still whole, he dazedly watched blood seeping from his heavy boot. Most of the heel of his left foot was gone, but he was soon taken care of.

All thought of the bomb run and Cologne out of his mind, McDowell fought with his nose-heavy airplane.

In the mangled ball turret, gunner Ed Abdo was trapped. Someone shoved a blanket down through the gaping hole to protect him from the icy slipstream.

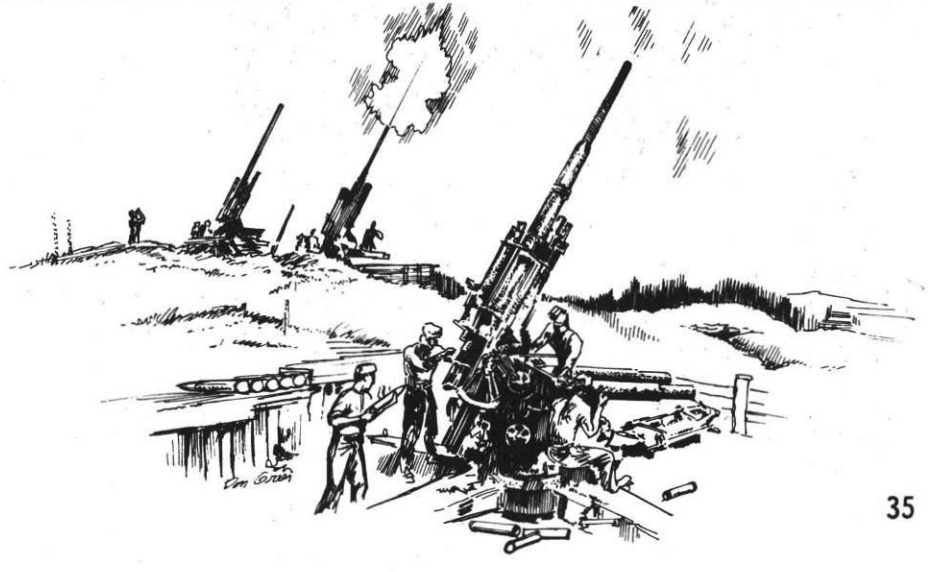


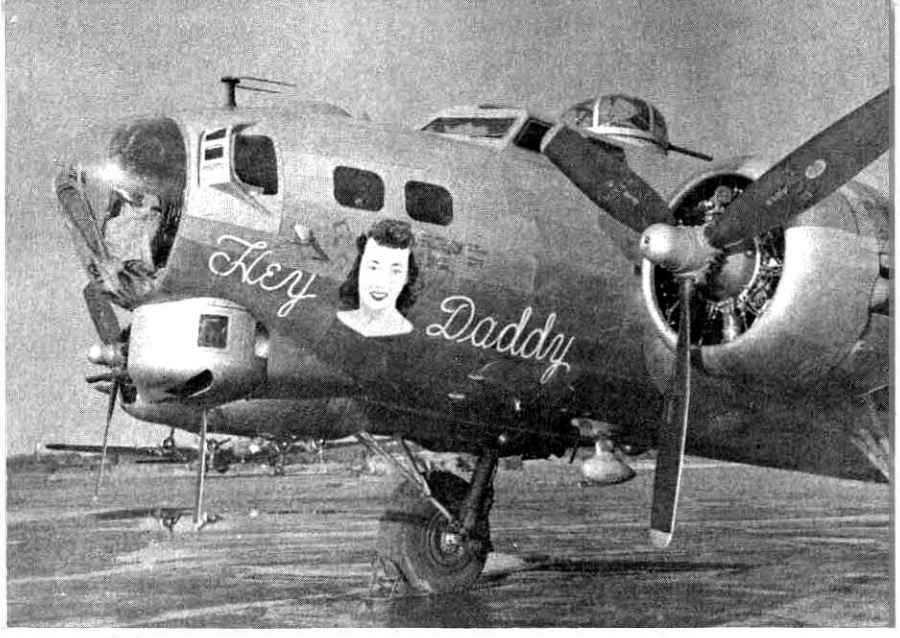
McDowell was at 27,000 feet and he needed to get down fast. He sent the co-pilot back to get hold of some of the severed control cables, but he grasped the wrong one and **Little Miss Mischief** tried harder to dive. McDowell brought Balaban back to fight the control column, and made his way through to the waist, stationing the radio operator at the bomb bay. The radio man would have to relay signals to and from pilot and co-pilot as things got better or worse. McDowell grabbed the right cable first time and they re-trimmed the aircraft for hands-off flight at around 110 miles an hour.

The heavy pressure on the control wheel eased, and the situation was in hand, but McDowell still had problems. That big hole back there was naturally number one, and Ed Abdo trapped in the ball meant he had to make a landing, and a perfect one. He was more nervous than scared. Back in the waist, looking at the sky all around him, he had felt sure that if the Fortress cracked in two he would be able to get out, because he was already wearing a back-pack chute. . .but if she broke up on landing. . .Fire was always his biggest fear, and that was remote now, but he was surely nervous.

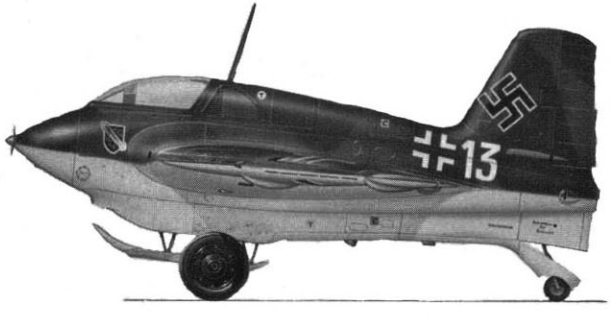
By the time they arrived at Bassingbourn the engineer was working hard, operating the trim tab and rudder cables from the waist, and the ball turret gunner, having administered morphine to himself, was frost-bitten but still alive. His role as one of the luckiest men in the 8th Air Force cost him one little toe.

McDowell got her down, and **Little Miss Mischief** went to the hangar. For a while her future looked doubtful, but Colonel Frank Kamykowski of the 444th Sub Depot didn't like wasting airplanes. He had a spare rear end from an old olive drab Fortress and decided to make a special effort. Before the repair operation was over, **Little Miss Mischief** contained bits and pieces from thirteen different aircraft. While her front end was still mostly B-17G 42-97880, built by Vega, her new rear end was made by Boeing in Seattle. **Little Miss Mischief** flew fourteen or fifteen more missions, for a grand total of fifty, before she crashed at Bassingbourn. She was quite a lady and is the subject of our cover painting by Don Greer.

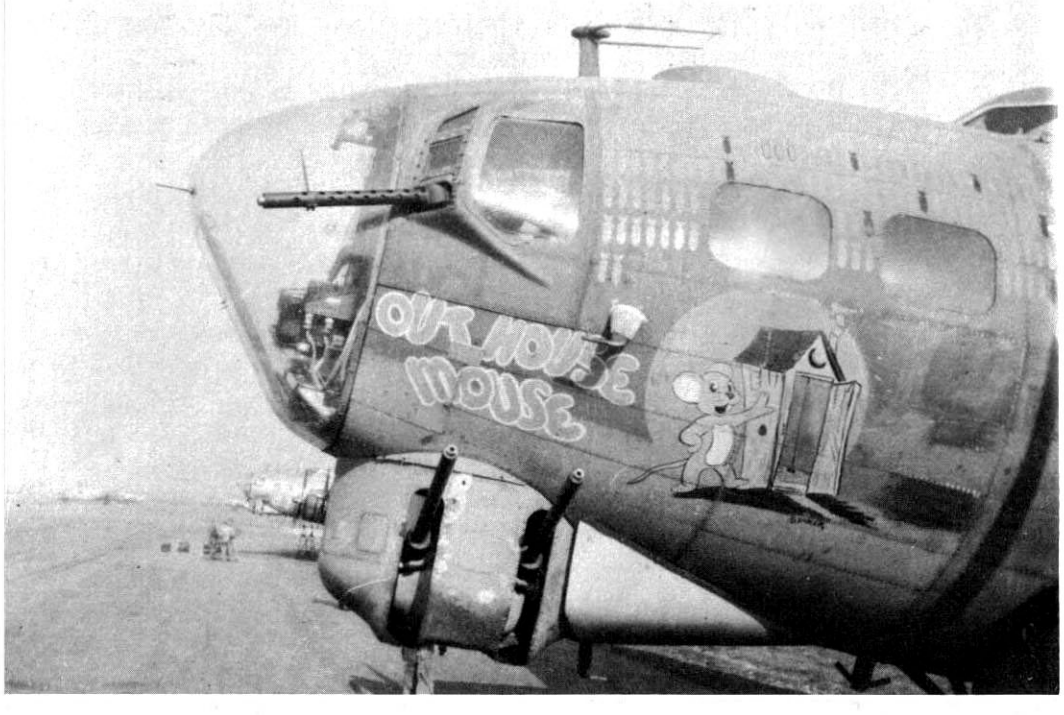




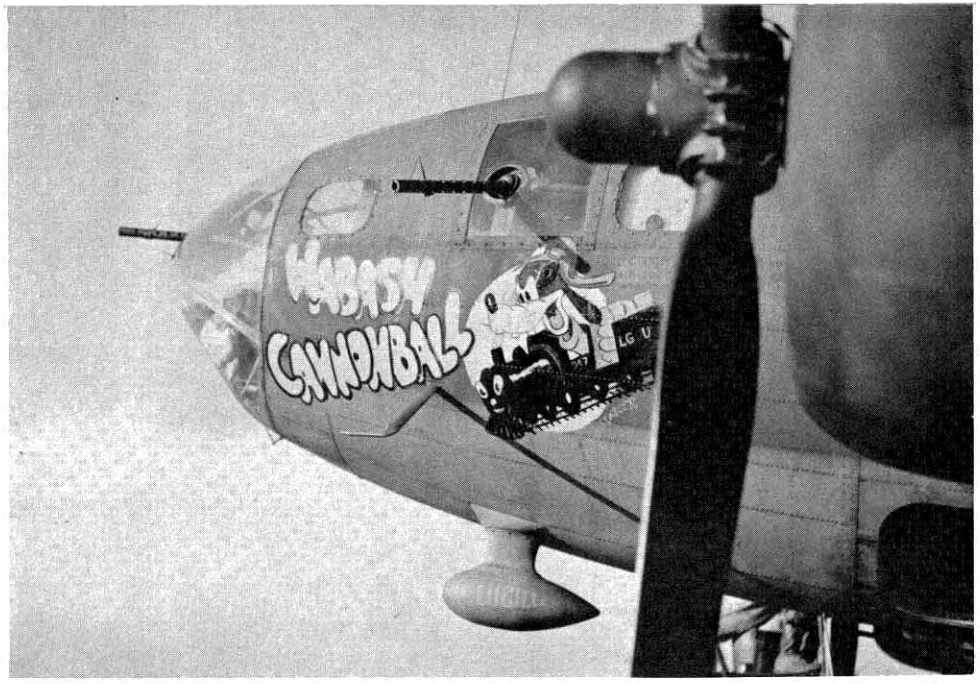
Hey Daddy, a brand-new B-17G-75-BO, flies a practice mission with the 401st Bomb Squadron.



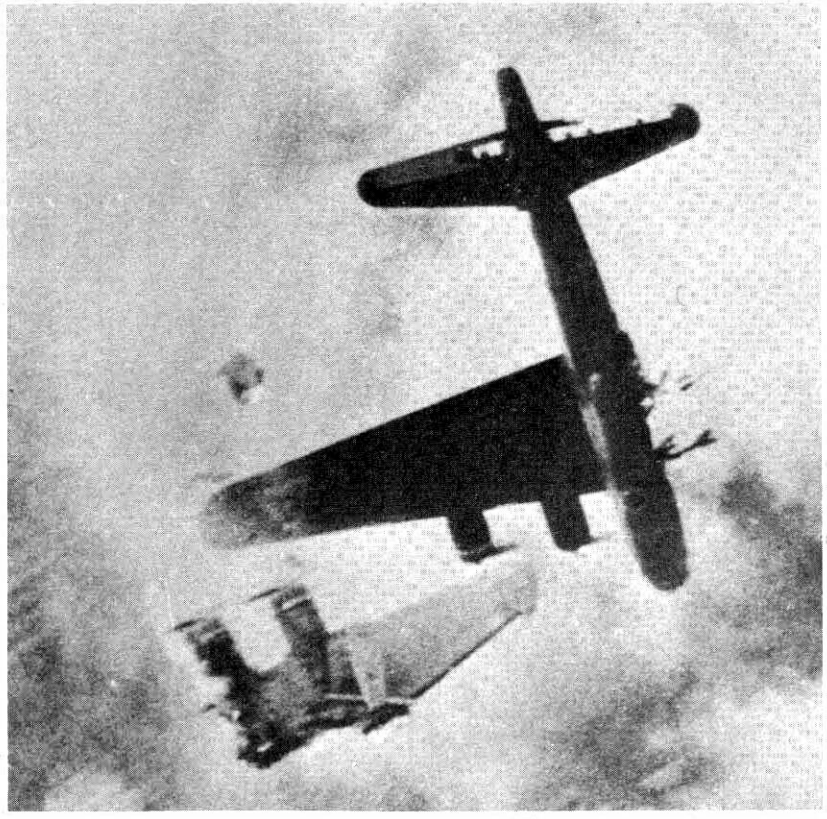
KOMET ME 163



Outhouse Mouse was 42-31636, a B-17G-25-BO. Her code letters were OR-N and she was in the 323rd Squadron. She was a fine complement to her sister ship **Nine-O-Nine,** racking up 139 missions for a grand total of 279 missions between the old aircraft. **Outhouse Mouse** also had the distinction of being the first B-17 attacked by an Me163 rocket fighter, on August 16, 1944.

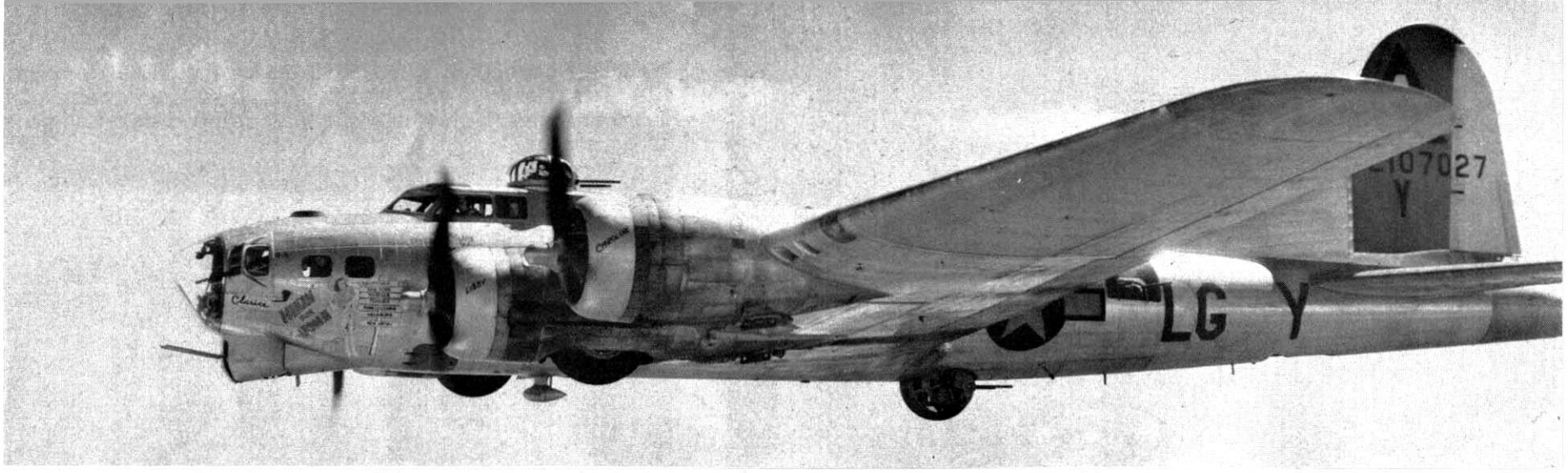


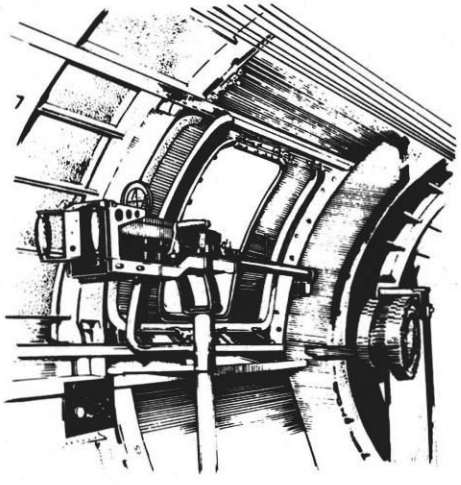
Wabash Cannonball, a B-17F-80-BO of the 322nd Squadron. After her missions with the 91st Group 42-29947 went to the 303rd at Molesworth where she was stripped down and used as an assembly ship.



One of the most famous pictures of the war, and the end of **Wee Willie's** 128th mission. Contrary to other reports, eyewitnesses in the 91st state that a direct hit from flak destroyed **Wee Willie** over Stendahl on April 8, 1945.

One of her crews poses proudly by **Wee Willie,** another seemingly indestructible 91st Group B-17G, about the time she reached the hundred mission mark. Her serial was 42-31333, and she was the last B-17 lost in combat by the group.

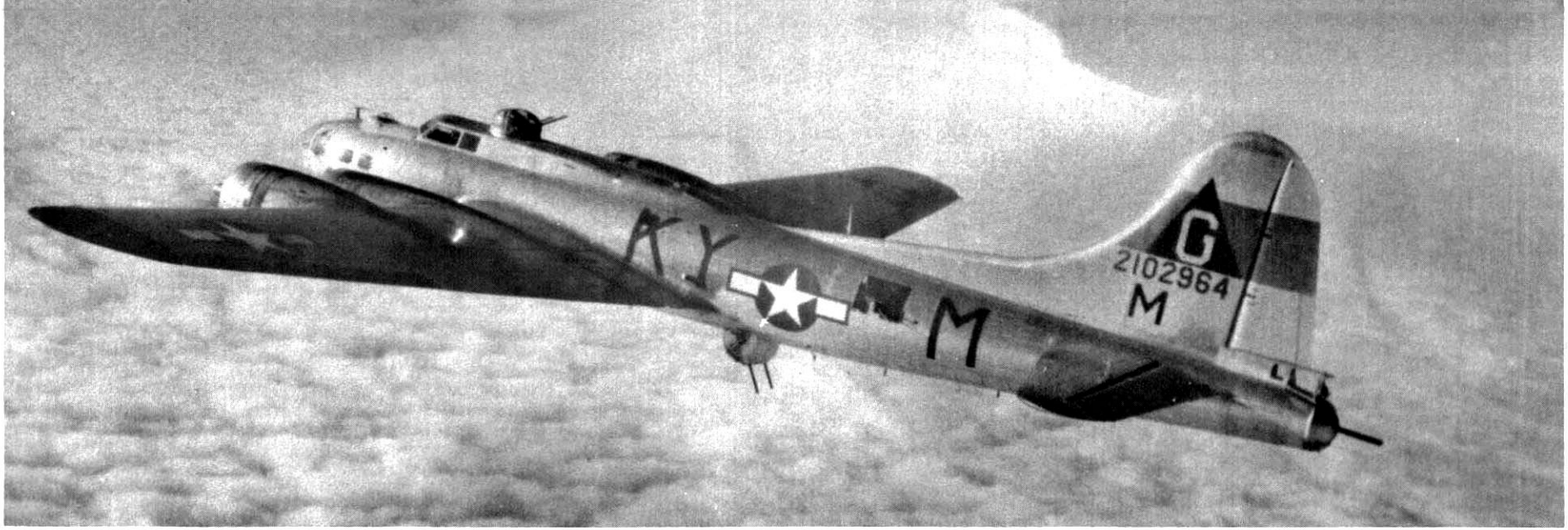


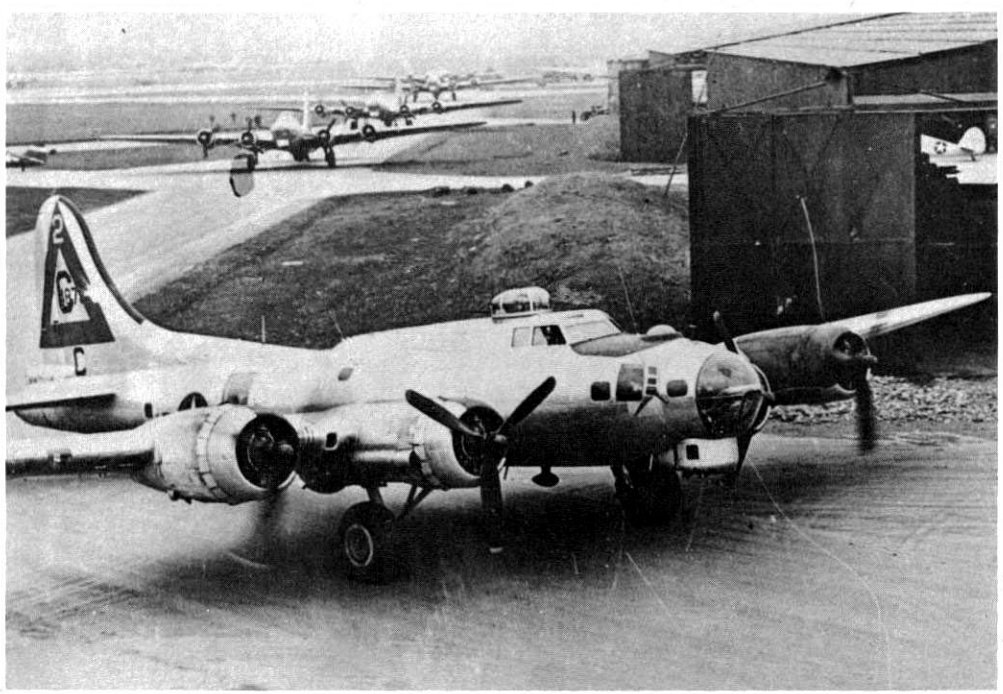


WAIST GUN POSITION

B-17G-35-DL 42-107027 **Hikin' For Home** of 322nd Squadron, 91st Bomb Group. Often times crew members would print the names of girlfriends near their gun position, hence the 'Clarice' near the cheek gun. Also note engines nacelles.

Probably the only Fortress named after a racehorse, **Man O War II** had an enviable record with the 322nd Squadron before fighters got her early in the air battle over Merseberg on November 2, 1944. She was serialled 42-38083, the last B-17G-25-DL, and carried the code letters LG-V. She had flown 15 missions in March 1944, when this photograph was taken.



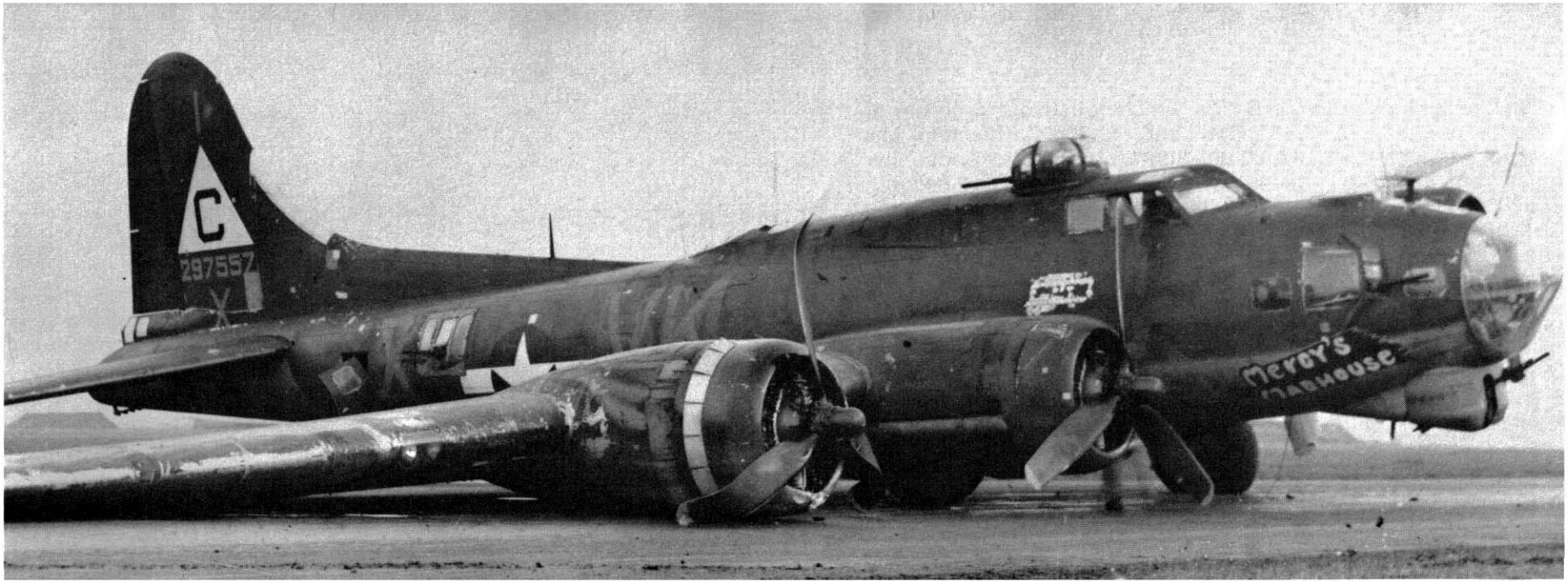


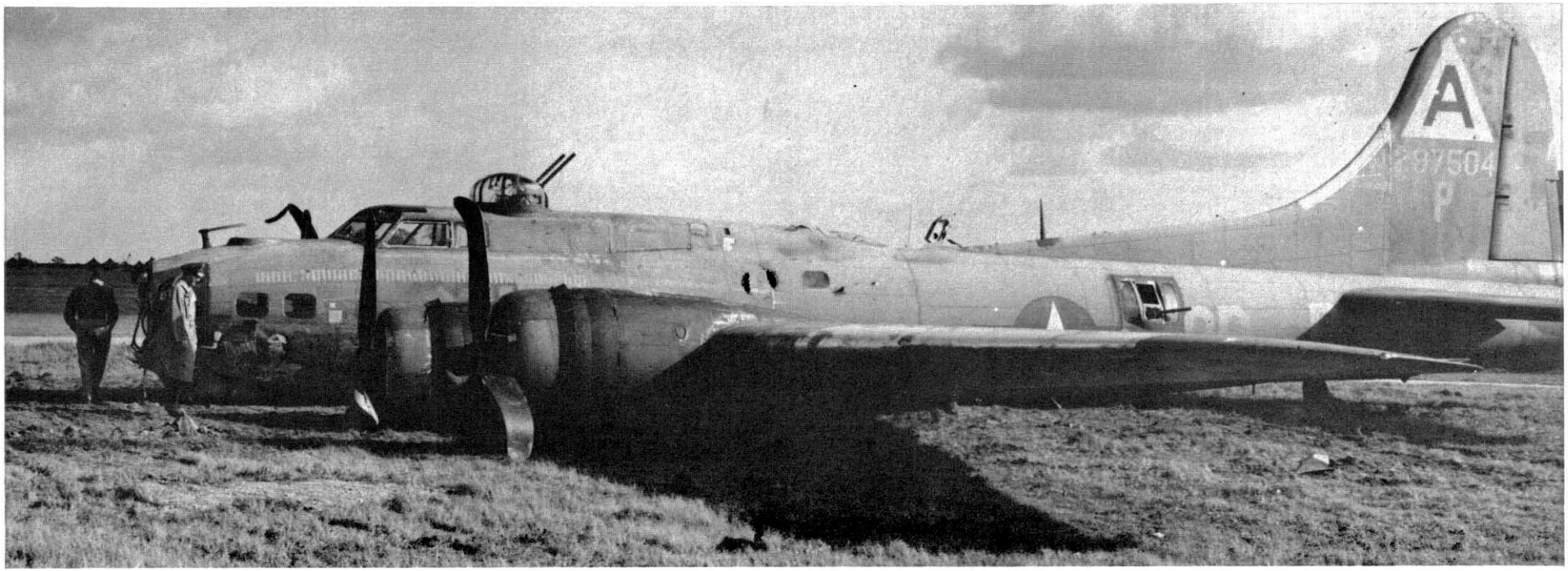
A beautifully marked B-17G from the 366th Bomb Squadron, 305th Bomb Group. The tail band is green, the triangle black, the group letter natural metal. All other group markings are black.

(Above Right) The battered **Mercy's Madhouse** from the 358th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. She carries a mixture of early and late 303rd markings. The small triangle, outlined in red on fully marked aircraft, the diminished serial, and the numeral at the apex of the triangle identifying the squadron, were features of the final markings of the 303rd, adopted after August 1944. The fuselage shows evidence of previous ownership.

(RIGHT) **Mary Lou,** a B-17G-5-VE, crashed on return from a mission in September 1944. The ball turret stanchion has broken through the fuselage skin, as usual in a Fortress belly landing.

(LEFT) B-17G-80-VE 44-8734, 359th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. Partially marked for maximum effort mission in April 1945.


C
297557
MERCY'S
TABMOUSE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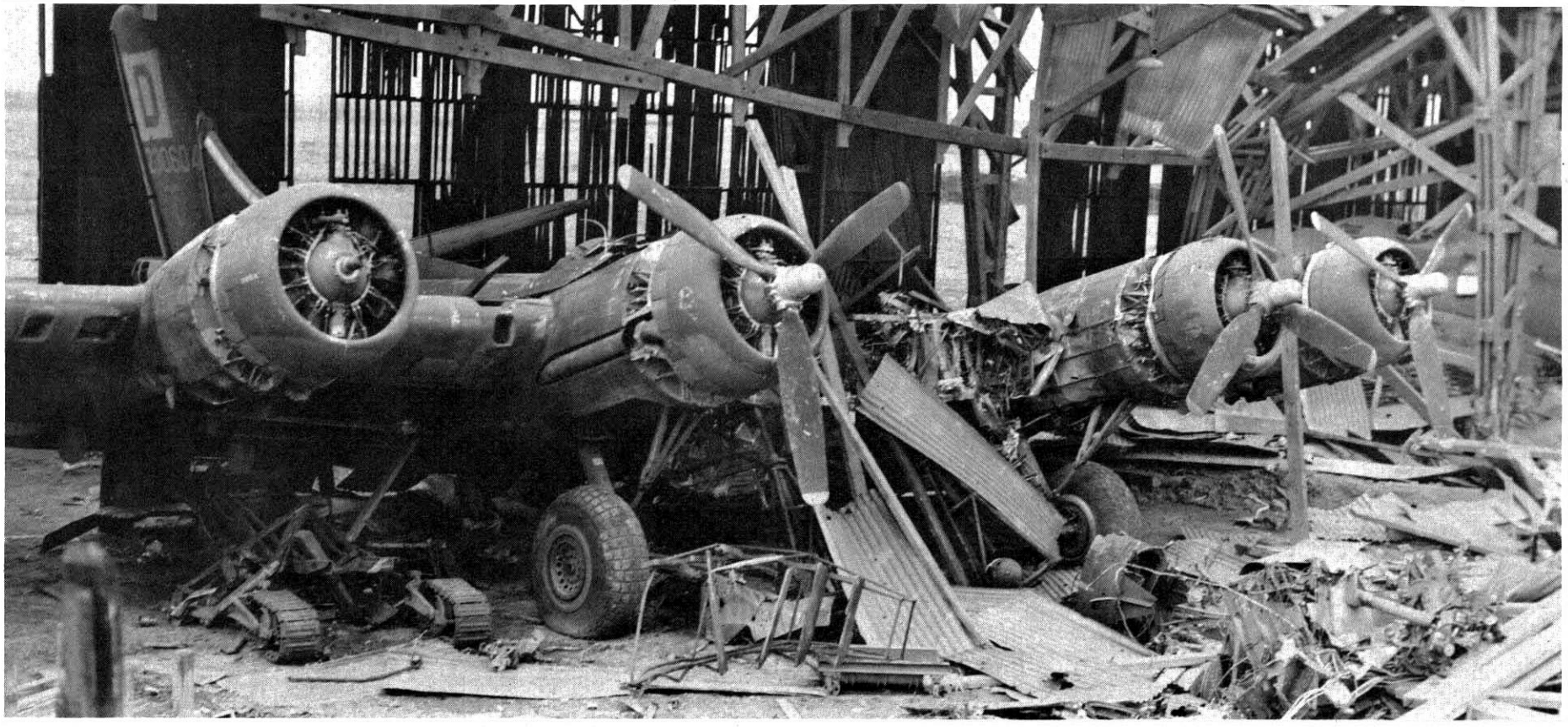
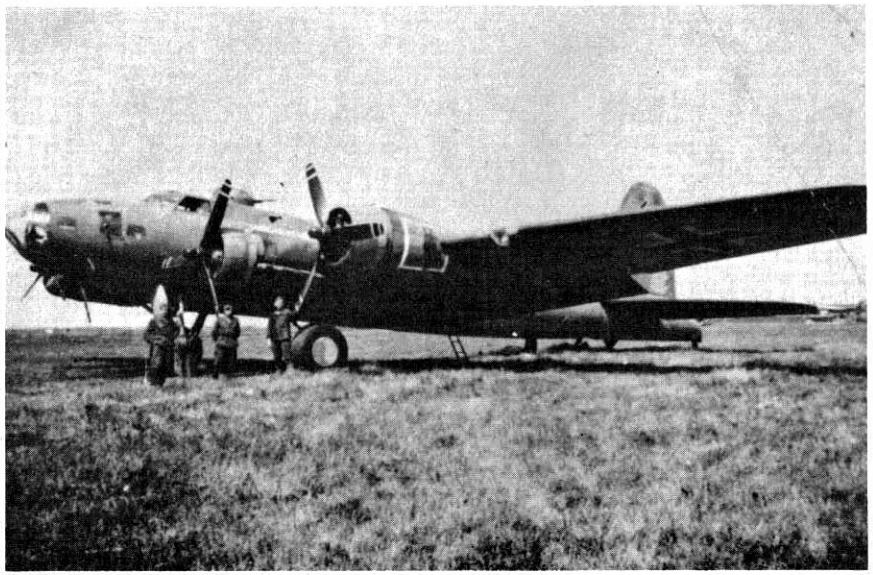
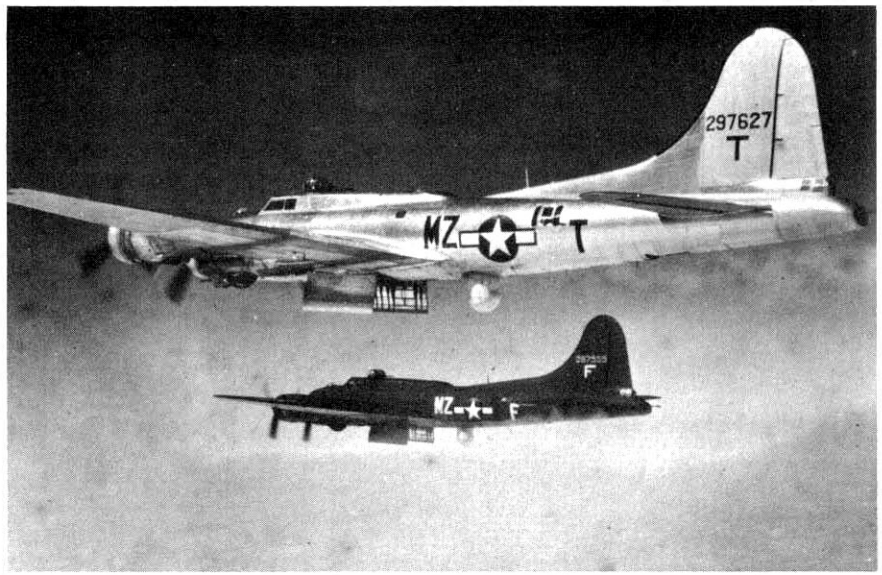
It was an unlucky pair of B-17's which rolled out together at Seattle one day in 1943. The first, 42-30603, became **Las Vegas Avenger** with the 306th Bomb Group and ended her days on June 21, 1944 near Amsterdam. The second, 42-30604, went to the 100th Group and was reported missing in action on October 4, 1943, during a particularly bloody week in the 8th Air Force. When allied troops captured an airport between Versailles and Chateaufort in September 1944 they found her and whole hangars of partially salvaged allied aircraft, demolished by the retreating Germans. The retention of the original 100th Bomb Group markings indicates that the aircraft was destined for clandestine work with the Luftwaffe.



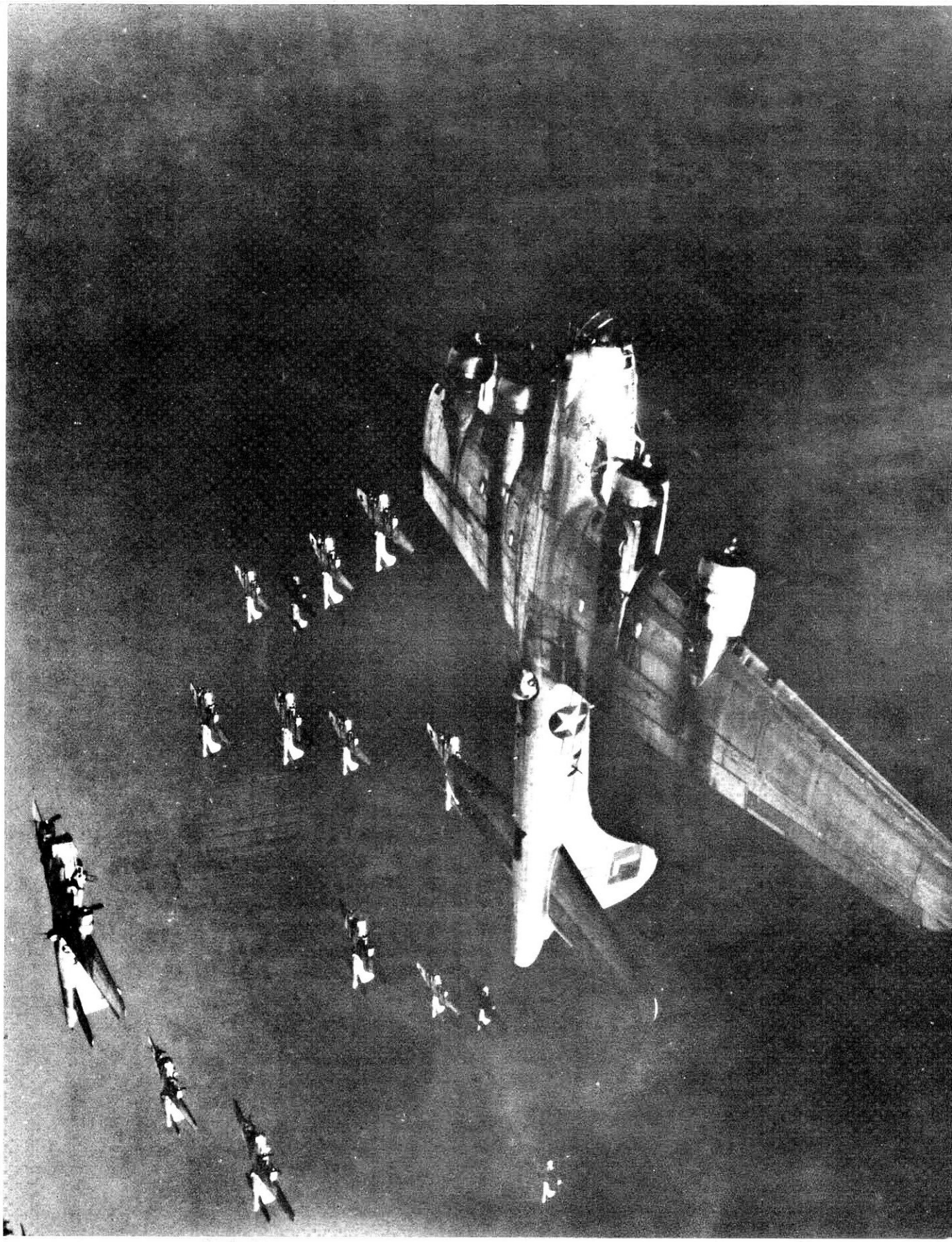
The classic bomber profile. Named **Just Nothing** because of her serial number, this brand-new B-17G-10-VE is heading for Croisette in France on January 14, 1944.



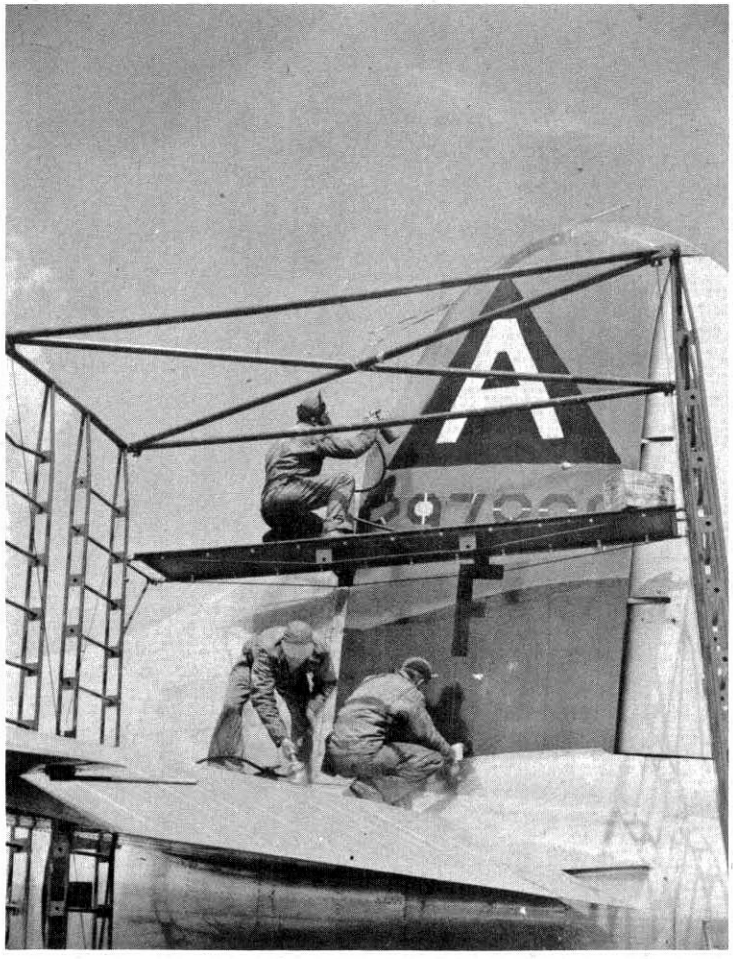
Most B-17's that fell into German hands were repainted in German markings and used for trainning Luftwaffe fighter pilots in the art of attacking these big birds.



Two 'Mickey' B-17G's from the 96th Bomb Group's 413th Squadron. Both B-17G-20-VE's, their BTO domes replaced the Sperry ball turret, and no division or group tail insignia was carried.



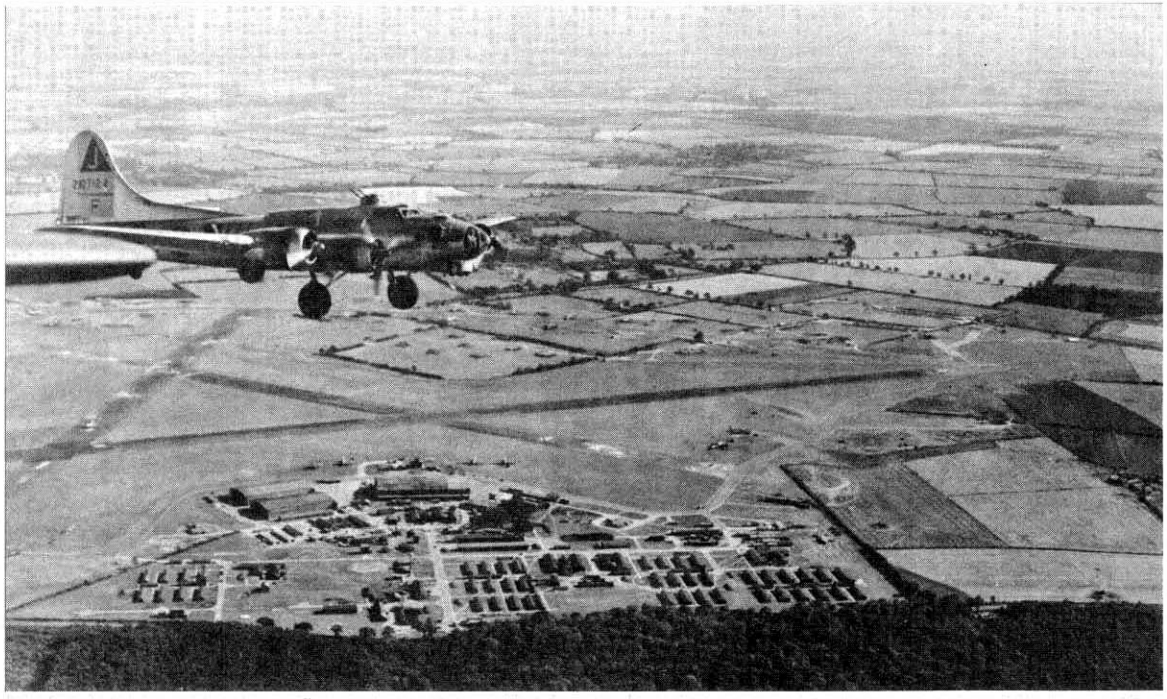
With the 96th Group's formation in the background, the 452nd's **Big Time Operator,** a B-17G-45-BO, heads out on a May 1944 mission.



Corporal Charlie Busa sprays on the red tail markings of a 91st Bomb Group aircraft. Getting replacement aircraft ready was a big job after a bad mission, and many Fortresses went out partially marked.

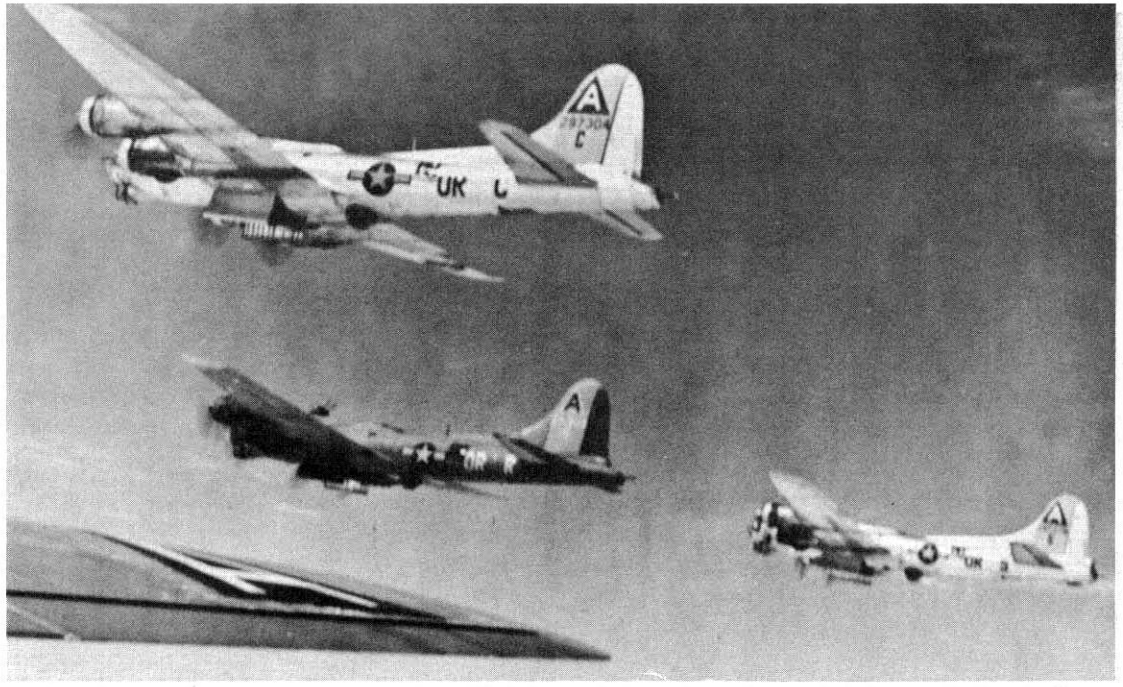
B-17F-25-BO **Hell's Angels,** 358th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. First 8th Air Force B-17 to complete 25 missions.

Towards the end of the war markings became more standardized, more colorful, and more studiously applied. This 323rd Squadron aircraft, **Old Battle Axe,** carries the complete 91st Group markings of red horizontal tail surfaces, red tail, and red wingtips.

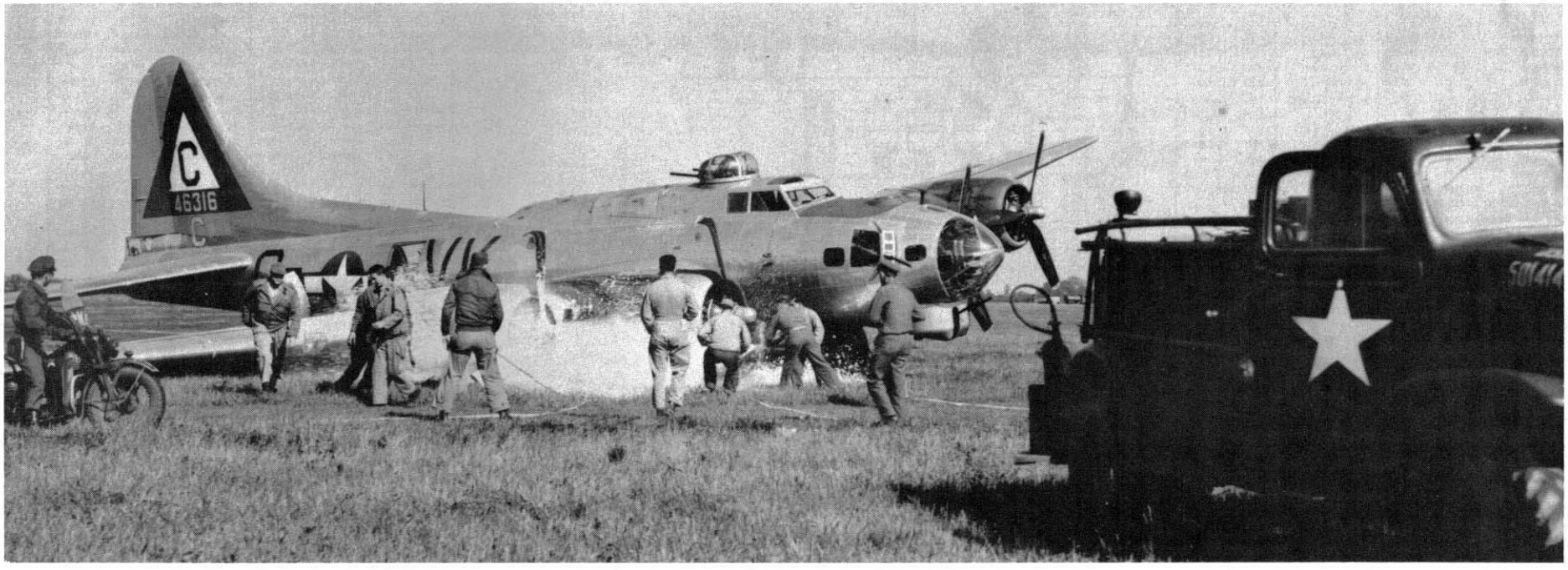


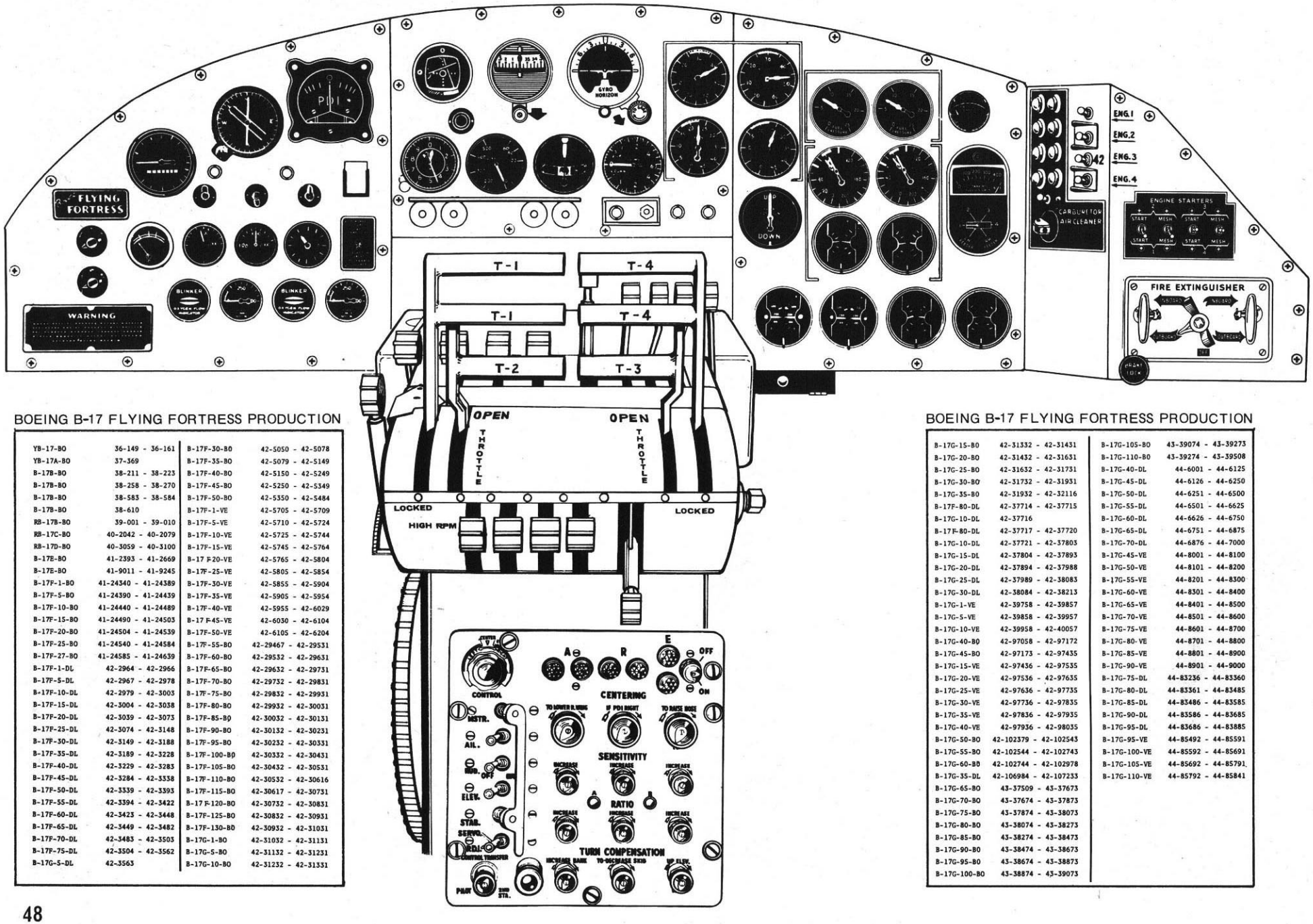
A B-17G-35-DL in the pattern over Polebrook, England, home of the 351st Bomb Group. 42-107124 is from the 510th Squadron.

Flanked by younger, silvery sisters, old **Nine-O-Nine** prepares to unload her bombs. OR-C is **Priority Gal,** OR-S is **Sweet 17.**



A B-17G-50-DL from the 303rd Bomb Group, crashed at Molesworth. The aircraft letter on the tail is yellow outlined in black, the serial is yellow and the surround to the triangle is red.





BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS PRODUCTION

YB-17-BO	36-149 - 36-161
YB-17A-BO	37-369
B-17B-BO	38-211 - 38-223
B-17B-BO	38-258 - 38-270
B-17B-BO	38-583 - 38-584
B-17B-BO	38-610
RB-17B-BO	39-001 - 39-010
RB-17C-BO	40-2042 - 40-2079
RB-17D-BO	40-3059 - 40-3100
B-17E-BO	41-2393 - 41-2669
B-17E-BO	41-9011 - 41-9245
B-17F-1-BO	41-24340 - 41-24389
B-17F-5-BO	41-24390 - 41-24439
B-17F-10-BO	41-24440 - 41-24489
B-17F-15-BO	41-24490 - 41-24503
B-17F-20-BO	41-24504 - 41-24539
B-17F-25-BO	41-24540 - 41-24584
B-17F-27-BO	41-24585 - 41-24639
B-17F-1-DL	42-2964 - 42-2966
B-17F-5-DL	42-2967 - 42-2978
B-17F-10-DL	42-2979 - 42-3003
B-17F-15-DL	42-3004 - 42-3038
B-17F-20-DL	42-3039 - 42-3073
B-17F-25-DL	42-3074 - 42-3148
B-17F-30-DL	42-3149 - 42-3188
B-17F-35-DL	42-3189 - 42-3228
B-17F-40-DL	42-3229 - 42-3283
B-17F-45-DL	42-3284 - 42-3338
B-17F-50-DL	42-3339 - 42-3393
B-17F-55-DL	42-3394 - 42-3422
B-17F-60-DL	42-3423 - 42-3448
B-17F-65-DL	42-3449 - 42-3482
B-17F-70-DL	42-3483 - 42-3503
B-17F-75-DL	42-3504 - 42-3562
B-17G-5-DL	42-3563
B-17F-30-BO	42-5050 - 42-5078
B-17F-35-BO	42-5079 - 42-5149
B-17F-40-BO	42-5150 - 42-5249
B-17F-45-BO	42-5250 - 42-5349
B-17F-50-BO	42-5350 - 42-5484
B-17F-1-VE	42-5705 - 42-5709
B-17F-5-VE	42-5710 - 42-5724
B-17F-10-VE	42-5725 - 42-5744
B-17F-15-VE	42-5745 - 42-5764
B-17 F-20-VE	42-5765 - 42-5804
B-17F-25-VE	42-5805 - 42-5854
B-17F-30-VE	42-5855 - 42-5904
B-17F-35-VE	42-5905 - 42-5954
B-17F-40-VE	42-5955 - 42-6029
B-17 F-45-VE	42-6030 - 42-6104
B-17F-50-VE	42-6105 - 42-6204
B-17F-55-BO	42-29467 - 42-29531
B-17F-60-BO	42-29532 - 42-29631
B-17F-65-BO	42-29632 - 42-29731
B-17F-70-BO	42-29732 - 42-29831
B-17F-75-BO	42-29832 - 42-29931
B-17F-80-BO	42-29932 - 42-30031
B-17F-85-BO	42-30032 - 42-30131
B-17F-90-BO	42-30132 - 42-30231
B-17F-95-BO	42-30232 - 42-30331
B-17F-100-BO	42-30332 - 42-30431
B-17F-105-BO	42-30432 - 42-30531
B-17F-110-BO	42-30532 - 42-30616
B-17F-115-BO	42-30617 - 42-30731
B-17 F-120-BO	42-30732 - 42-30831
B-17F-125-BO	42-30832 - 42-30931
B-17F-130-BO	42-30932 - 42-31031
B-17G-1-BO	42-31032 - 42-31131
B-17G-5-BO	42-31132 - 42-31231
B-17G-10-BO	42-31232 - 42-31331

BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS PRODUCTION

B-17G-15-BO	42-31332 - 42-31431
B-17G-20-BO	42-31432 - 42-31631
B-17G-25-BO	42-31632 - 42-31731
B-17G-30-BO	42-31732 - 42-31931
B-17G-35-BO	42-31932 - 42-32116
B-17F-80-DL	42-37714 - 42-37715
B-17G-10-DL	42-37716
B-17F-80-DL	42-37717 - 42-37720
B-17G-10-DL	42-37721 - 42-37803
B-17G-15-DL	42-37804 - 42-37893
B-17G-20-DL	42-37894 - 42-37988
B-17G-25-DL	42-37989 - 42-38083
B-17G-30-DL	42-38084 - 42-38213
B-17G-1-VE	42-39758 - 42-39857
B-17G-5-VE	42-39858 - 42-39957
B-17G-10-VE	42-39958 - 42-40057
B-17G-40-BO	42-97058 - 42-97172
B-17G-45-BO	42-97173 - 42-97435
B-17G-15-VE	42-97436 - 42-97535
B-17G-20-VE	42-97536 - 42-97635
B-17G-25-VE	42-97636 - 42-97735
B-17G-30-VE	42-97736 - 42-97835
B-17G-35-VE	42-97836 - 42-97935
B-17G-40-VE	42-97936 - 42-98035
B-17G-50-BO	42-102379 - 42-102543
B-17G-55-BO	42-102544 - 42-102743
B-17G-60-BO	42-102744 - 42-102978
B-17G-35-DL	42-106984 - 42-107233
B-17G-65-BO	43-37509 - 43-37673
B-17G-70-BO	43-37674 - 43-37873
B-17G-75-BO	43-37874 - 43-38073
B-17G-80-BO	43-38074 - 43-38273
B-17G-85-BO	43-38274 - 43-38473
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B-17G-95-BO	43-38674 - 43-38873
B-17G-100-BO	43-38874 - 43-39073
B-17G-105-BO	43-39074 - 43-39273
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B-17G-40-DL	44-6001 - 44-6125
B-17G-45-DL	44-6126 - 44-6250
B-17G-50-DL	44-6251 - 44-6500
B-17G-55-DL	44-6501 - 44-6625
B-17G-60-DL	44-6626 - 44-6750
B-17G-65-DL	44-6751 - 44-6875
B-17G-70-DL	44-6876 - 44-7000
B-17G-45-VE	44-8001 - 44-8100
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B-17G-80-DL	44-83361 - 44-83485
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B-17G-90-DL	44-83586 - 44-83685
B-17G-95-DL	44-83686 - 44-83885
B-17G-95-VE	44-85492 - 44-85591
B-17G-100-VE	44-85592 - 44-85691
B-17G-105-VE	44-85692 - 44-85791
B-17G-110-VE	44-85792 - 44-85841

Blood'n Guts, a late 401st Squadron B-17G-60-VE fitted with the Cheyenne tail turret. The colored stripes on the tail cone possibly denote a flight leader.

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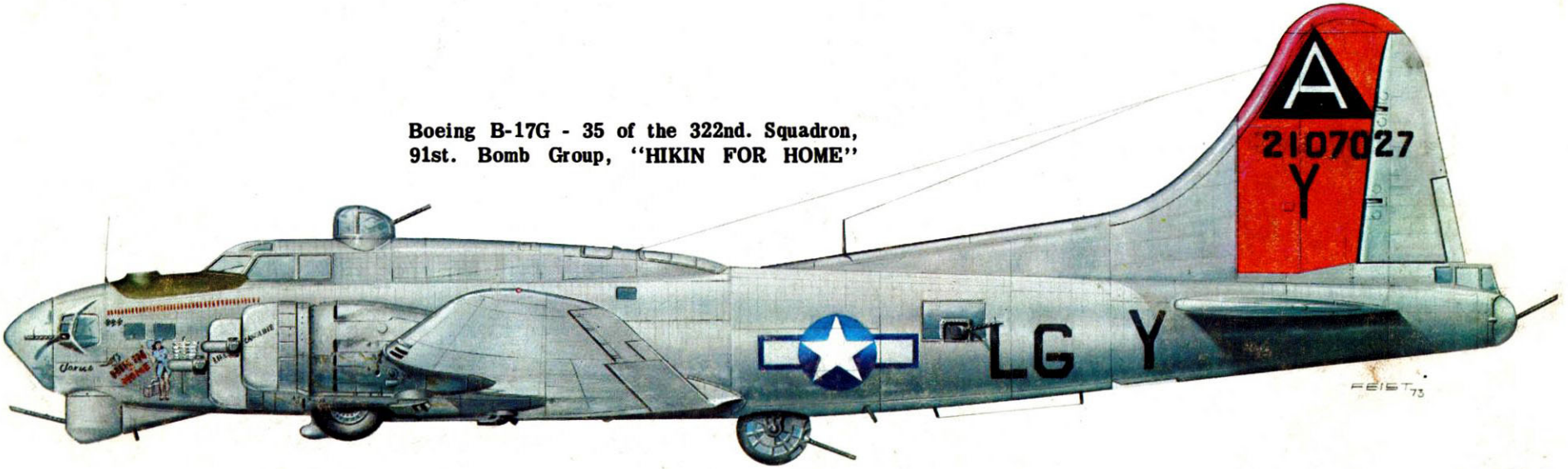
Boeing B-17G - 35 of the 322nd. Squadron,
91st. Bomb Group, "HIKIN FOR HOME"